

# **Exploring Social Media Marketing Towards a Richer Understanding of Social Media in Postmodernity**

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**Table of Contents:**

Abstract .....	7
The Authorship of the sections.....	9
INTRODUCTION.....	10
1. Methodology .....	13
1.1. Scientific paradigm: Social Constructivism.....	13
1.1.1. Research Approach .....	15
1.1.2. Research Methodology.....	16
1.1.2.1. Cases 1 and 2: Nike+ community and The Lost Experience .....	16
1.1.2.2. Case 3: Aarhus School of Business (ASB) .....	21
1.2. Thesis Structure.....	24
1.3. Literature and Theoretical Application .....	27
1.4. Limitations .....	28
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	30
2.1. Postmodern marketing.....	30
2.1.1. Short introduction to postmodernity .....	30
2.1.2. Why does traditional marketing not work anymore? .....	35
2.1.3. Implications of postmodernity to marketing .....	37
2.2. Social Media.....	42
2.2.1. What is it?.....	43
2.2.2. Technological, social, and business aspects of Social Media. ....	43

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2.2.3.	Social Media Marketing.....	45
2.2.3.1.	Social Media Marketing: Definition and objectives .....	45
2.2.3.2.	Characteristics of Social Media Marketing.....	47
2.2.3.3.	Customer Relationship Management: the core of Social Media Marketing .....	50
2.2.4.	Common Social Media Marketing Strategies.....	52
2.2.4.1.	Blogging strategy .....	52
2.2.4.2.	Virtual community strategy.....	55
2.2.4.3.	Social networking strategy .....	57
2.2.4.4.	Twitter Marketing .....	59
2.2.4.5.	Viral marketing strategy.....	61
2.2.4.6.	Search engines, RSS, wikis, and podcasts .....	62
2.2.5.	Risks and fears of using social media marketing .....	63
2.3.	Social media marketing and postmodernity .....	65
3.	CASE ANALYSIS.....	68
3.1.	Case #1: Nike+ .....	68
3.1.1.	Nike's social media activity previous to Nike+ .....	68
3.1.2.	Nike+ - the biggest runners' community online.....	73
3.1.3.	Nike+ results .....	78
3.2.	Case #2: The Lost Experience.....	85
3.2.1.	Pre-campaign stage .....	85
3.2.2.	The Lost Experience campaign.....	87

---

3.2.2.1.	Key features of The Lost Experience .....	88
3.2.2.2.	The Lost Experience phases .....	90
3.2.3.	After The Lost Experience .....	96
4.	Discussion .....	100
4.1.	<i>Nike+</i> online community and <i>The Lost Experience</i> through the postmodern lens .....	100
4.1.1.	Social media marketing strategies .....	100
4.1.2.	The postmodern conditions .....	106
4.2.	Theoretical foundation for the relationship between social media marketing and postmodernity .....	112
4.2.1.	Defining social media marketing .....	112
4.2.2.	Social media marketing: the connection between postmodern individuals and organisations .....	116
4.3.	Recommendations: How can social media be used as a marketing tool in the context of postmodernity? .....	122
4.4.	ASB case .....	126
4.4.1.	The overview: Aarhus School of Business .....	127
4.4.2.	Aarhus School of business' social media strategy .....	131
4.4.3.	ASB social media initiatives .....	138
4.4.4.	Recommendations for ASB social media strategy .....	143
	CONCLUSION .....	151
	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	157

APPENDICES.....	174
Appendix 1: Questions for the Nike interview.....	174
Appendix 2: Social Media Types.....	175
Appendix 3: Nike-related documents.....	179
Appendix 4: Lost-related documents.....	202
Appendix 5: Screenshots for section 4.2.2.....	232
Appendix 6: The transcript of the interview with Nikolaj Hoencke Keldorff.....	234
Appendix 7: ASB related documents.....	247

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## List of Tables and Figures

Table 1: The Characteristics of the interpretive worldview .....	13
Table 2: Three aspects of postmodern social life .....	33
Table 3: Postmodern conditions and their main themes .....	34
Table 4: Gillin's (2008) recommendations for Social Marketing .....	46
Table 5: Old Marketing versus New Marketing .....	49
Table 6: ASB social media and other online initiatives .....	132
Figure 1: The use of methodology in the case of ASB .....	23
Figure 2: Thesis structure .....	26
Figure 3: Ranking of social media channels used by organisations .....	46
Figure 4: Comments retrieved from Lost's Facebook page in October 2009 .....	98
Figure 5: The ASB Organisation (Aarhus School of Business, 2009c) .....	130

## **Exploring Social Media Marketing**

### **Towards a Richer Understanding of Social Media in Postmodernity**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** Marketing professionals and scholars are witnessing the emergence of social media as a completely new communication tool for directing their marketing messages. Consequently, during the past few years many books and articles have been published on the subject, although few authors have investigated this phenomenon in the context of its epoch. Thus, the study explores social media marketing through the lens of postmodernity. The thesis investigates how companies can employ social media in order to communicate with postmodern consumers.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Combining documentation with a one-to-one interview, a multiple case study is conducted. The paper, conceived as a qualitative study, employs an ‘inductive then deductive’ reasoning. Thus, the findings, generated from the analysis of two social media marketing strategies carried out by Nike and ABC, are used to generate a number of general recommendations for organisations. The recommendations are later applied to the case of Aarhus School of Business (ASB).

**Findings:** The papers concludes that social media is a valuable tool for marketers in order to deal with the chaos, complexity, contradictions and change that postmodernity has brought to the discipline of marketing. Additionally, the research suggests ASB to provide not only functional, but also social and entertaining values through its social media strategy, as well as change its focus from ‘broadcaster’ to ‘mediator’ and ‘facilitator’ of conversations.

**Practical implications:** The findings of this study are summarised in a number of recommendations for companies which aim to implement social media marketing strategies in postmodernity. Furthermore, the paper contributes to the marketing practice through the application of its findings to a real organisation.

**Originality/value:** The paper documents the use of two ground-breaking social media strategies; extends the current literature on social media marketing; offers some recommendations to companies; and discusses the use of social media marketing in a specific organisation in relation to its findings.



**Keywords:** *Social Media, Social Media Marketing, Postmodern Marketing, Postmodernity*

## THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE SECTIONS

INTRODUCTION *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

1. Methodology *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Postmodern marketing *written by Monika Garnyte*

2.2. Social Media

2.2.1. What is it? *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.2.2. Technological, social, and business aspects of Social Media *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.2.3. Social Media Marketing *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.2.4. Common Social Media Marketing Strategies

2.2.4.1. Blogging strategy *written by Monika Garnyte*

2.2.4.2. Virtual community strategy *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.2.4.3. Social networking strategy *written by Monika Garnyte*

2.2.4.4. Twitter Marketing *written by Monika Garnyte*

2.2.4.5. Viral marketing strategy *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.2.4.6. Search engines, RSS, wikis, and podcasts *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.2.5. Risks and fears of using social media marketing *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

2.3. Social media marketing and postmodernity *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

3. CASE ANALYSIS

3.1. Case #1: Nike+ *written by Monika Garnyte*

3.2. Case #2: The Lost Experience *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Nike+ online community and The Lost Experience through the postmodern lens *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

4.2. Theoretical foundation for the relationship between social media marketing and postmodernity *written by Monika Garnyte*

4.3. Recommendations: How can social media be used as a marketing tool in the context of postmodernity? *written by Monika Garnyte*

4.4. ASB case *written by Monika Garnyte*

CONCLUSION *written by Ana de Ávila Pérez*

## INTRODUCTION

*“Once every hundred years media changes. The last hundred years have been defined by the mass media. The way to advertise was to get into the mass media and push out your content. That was the last hundred years. In the next hundred years information won’t be just pushed out to people, it will be shared among the millions of connections people have. Advertising will change. You will need to get into these connections”*

Mark Zuckerberg, Co-founder of Facebook (Maymann, 2008).

The business environment is very turbulent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As Smith & Taylor (2004) point out, in today’s world companies are facing many new unexpected issues, and the growth of the Internet as a communication channel is probably one of the most influential factors. The Internet not only made consumers more accessible (Smith & Taylor, 2004), but also carried out the appearance of completely new communication tools, which make the process of sharing information much easier and faster (Jaokar, Jacobs, Moore, & Ahvenainen, 2009). As Jaokar *et al.* (2009) suggest, “the people formerly known as the audience, are now the media” (p. 1) and, therefore, the way that companies need to communicate with their publics is also changing.

Thus, consumers and marketers are witnessing the emergence of virtual social networks. In November 2009 Facebook had more than 300 million active users and 50 per cent of them logged on to Facebook every day (Facebook, 2009). Moreover, the average Facebook user had 130 friends on the site, and 45 million active user groups existed on the platform (Facebook, 2009). The Internet and the online social networks allow individuals to connect with friends, family, colleagues and like-minded people. Since the beginning of the history, there has never been such an amount of human beings connected together through a network.

For a marketer, it becomes crucial to understand not only the rules of the medium, but also the expectations of its users. Nevertheless, although the amount of studies on the use of social media marketing is increasingly growing, few authors have investigated this phenomenon in the context of its epoch (Cova, 1996; Simmons, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Social

media is a product of the postmodern era. As Simmons (2008) points out, marketing professionals and academicians need to “react” (p. 299) to the change, complexity, chaos and contradiction that postmodernity has brought to the discipline, in order to secure its contribution in this new era.

Thus, assuming that the human kind lives in the postmodern era, and considering the quick development of social media, it becomes interesting to investigate how organisations can use this new communication tool for marketing purposes. Therefore, due to the limited research conducted in this area, the authors of the present thesis were motivated to explore social media marketing through the lens of postmodernity.

### **Problem Statement**

The aforementioned facts lead the authors of this thesis to the following problem statement:

With the complex task of dealing with the change, complexity, chaos and contradiction that postmodernity has brought to the discipline of marketing, how can social media be used as a marketing tool in order to communicate with postmodern consumers?

In order to contribute to the academic literature on this particular topic, and to support the findings of this study with empirical information, the present study will seek to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1): *How are companies using social media to direct their marketing messages to postmodern consumers?*

This study will aim to analyse how companies are using social media in order to communicate with postmodern consumers. Thus, a qualitative analysis will be conducted on two case studies of companies which have used social media for marketing purposes. Therefore, an online community built by Nike<sup>1</sup> (The Nike+ community), and an alternate reality game created by ABC<sup>2</sup> to promote its television series *Lost* (*The Lost Experience*) will be presented as best practice examples, and their use of social media will be related to the main conditions of postmodernity highlighted by Firat & Venkatesh (1995).

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<sup>1</sup> Nike Inc. is a sportswear and equipment supplier based in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> American television network, TV broadcaster and producer.

RQ2): *What are the connections between postmodernity and social media marketing?*

The researchers will attempt to contribute to the marketing literature by proposing a theoretical foundation for the relationship between social media marketing and postmodernity. Thus, given the theoretical overview provided and the analysis conducted on the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience*, the researchers will generalise to theoretical propositions and concepts. Consequently, the authors of this thesis will propose their own definition of social media and social media marketing, as well as explore its connections with the main postmodern conditions (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

RQ3): *What recommendations can be given to organisations which aim to use social media marketing in postmodernity?*

The findings generated from the two former research questions will be used to build a number of recommendations for organisations which aim to employ social media as a marketing tool in the postmodern era.

RQ4): *How can theoretical and empirical findings of the thesis can be applied to a real life case of Aarhus School of Business?*

In the last part of this thesis, the researchers will apply their findings to a real case study. Thus, the social media strategy of Aarhus School of Business (ASB) will be analysed in order to provide some suggestions for the organization, based on the recommendations defined in the previous section of the study. This will contribute to assess the transferability of the findings in this thesis.

## 1. METHODOLOGY

### 1.1. Scientific paradigm: Social Constructivism

As Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2005) point out, it is essential to determine how the social world that is about to be investigated is perceived by the authors of the thesis, so as to choose a pertinent scientific paradigm that will guide the investigation of the phenomenon of study. In choosing a scientific paradigm for a conduction of the research, three elements need to be determined:

- 1) *“Ontology: What is the nature of the “knowable”? Or, what is the nature of ‘reality’?”*
- 2) *Epistemology: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?*
- 3) *Methodology: How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?”*

(Guba, 1990, p. 18)

The authors of the present thesis adhered to an interpretive worldview, since they attempted to actively engage in the world of three different cases of study before going to interpret them. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the interpretive worldview.

**Table 1: The Characteristics of the interpretive worldview**

Interpretivism	
<b>Ontology:</b> the researchers' view of the nature of reality or being.	Socially constructed, subjective, may change, multiple.
<b>Epistemology:</b> the researchers' view of what constitutes acceptable knowledge.	Subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus upon the details of situation, a reality behind these details, subjective meanings, motivating actions.
<b>Data collection techniques more often used.</b>	Small samples, in-depth investigations, qualitative.

Source: adapted from Saunders et al. (2005, p. 19)

According to Daymon & Holloway (2002), interpretive researches adhere to social constructivism. As opposed to positivists, constructivist researchers do not consider that science can discover “how things ‘really’ are” (Guba, 1990, p. 25) or “how things ‘really’ work” (Guba, 1990, p. 25), because there is no one single resolution to these questions. Instead, constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed by the researchers (Guba, 1990). For constructivists, “realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experimentally based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the person who holds them” (Guba, 1990, p. 27) and, therefore, “many constructions are possible” (Guba, 1990, p. 25).

It is the authors’ conviction that this thesis draws on the constructivist paradigm, since the researchers have attempted to “reconstruct” the phenomenon of a study in the present paper. Furthermore, the researchers believe that the phenomenon of a study can be interpreted in different manners, and therefore many interpretations could co-exist simultaneously.

In order to understand the subjective nature of social reality, interpretive researchers normally employ qualitative research methods. According to Daymon & Holloway (2002), the main features of qualitative research are the following:

- Qualitative research is associated with words, as opposed to quantitative research, which focuses more on numbers.
- There is a close involvement of the researcher with the context under investigation.
- Researchers are interested in studying participant’s viewpoints: “people’s intentions, motivations, and subjective experiences”, as they attempted to “understand social reality from the point of view of those in it” (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 4).
- Qualitative research is linked to small-scale studies, since the researches normally require a deep and detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation.
- The focus of qualitative researchers is holistic. A complete picture of a phenomenon is sought, instead of the study of one or two isolated variables.

- Qualitative research tends to be less structured than quantitative research. Consequently, the research process is more adaptable, flexible, and open to study new variables that may emerge during the course of the investigation.

Questions that concern qualitative researches are, for example: “what’s going on here?”, “what communicative action is being performed?”, “how do they do it?” (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 14). Since this study attempts to investigate *how companies are using social media in postmodernity*, the present research demands a qualitative approach. A more detailed description of the research orientation (case study) and the various methods applied are presented in the following sections.

### ***1.1.1. Research Approach***

Another methodological aspect that needs to be considered is how the particular research will be designed.

The researchers of the present study work inductively by gathering data and then analysing and reflecting upon the theoretical themes that the data are suggesting (Saunders *et al.*, 2005). According to Saunders *et al.* (2005), induction approaches to research emphasise (p. 128):

- *“Gaining an understanding of the meaning humans attach to events.*
- *A close understanding of the research context.*
- *The collection of qualitative data.*
- *A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as research progresses.*
- *A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process.*
- *Less concern with the need to generalise.”*

(Saunders *et al.*, 2005, p.128)

As Daymon & Holloway (2002) indicate, “qualitative research tends to start with inductive reasoning and then, through sequential process, employs deduction reasoning” (p. 6). Thus, the researchers of the present study first gathered and analysed the data collected in order to identify general patterns. Then, they moved from inductive to deductive reasoning by applying their findings to a real case study.



### **1.1.2. Research Methodology**

The present research is conceived as an exploratory study. According to Robson (2002), an exploratory study attempts to investigate “what is happening; to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light” (p. 59). Exploratory research must be flexible enough to be able to change the direction of the investigation in case some new data demands it (Saunders *et al.*, 2005). However, as Saunders *et al.* (2005) point out, “the flexibility inherent in exploratory research does not mean absence of direction to the enquire” (p. 140).

The authors of this thesis opted for conducting a collective or multiple case studies for the investigation. According to Daymon & Holloway (2002),

*“a case study is an intensive examination, using multiple sources of evidence (which may be qualitative, quantitative or both), of a single entity which is bounded by time and place. Usually it is associated with a location. The 'case' may be an organization, a set of people such as a social or work group, a community, an event, a process, an issue or a campaign”* (p. 105).

According to Daymon & Holloway (2002), it is very important to define the boundaries of the investigation, since case studies are bounded by time and place.

A total of three cases were analysed for the purpose of this investigation. As Daymon & Holloway (2002) point out, it is not recommendable to choose more than four cases “because the larger the number, the more the benefits of the case study approach will be diminished” (p. 108).

#### **1.1.2.1. Cases 1 and 2: Nike+ community and The Lost Experience**

The first two case studies, presented in the Chapter 3, are analysed in order to answer the first research question of this thesis: *How are companies using social media to direct their messages to postmodern consumers?*

#### **Sample selection**

According to Daymon & Holloway (2002) point out, the use of two or more cases enables some measure of generalization to a wider universe. Thus, the present paper describes and discusses two social media marketing strategies carried out by two different organisations:

- 1) The Nike+ community: an online community created by Nike Inc., a sportswear and equipment company based in the U.S. The Nike+ community was created in 2006 in order to promote Nike+ a new range of products launched by the organisation, as well as engage consumers with the brand.
- 2) *The Lost Experience*: an Alternate Reality Game (ARG) conducted by the American television network ABC, in a partnership with Channel 4 (UK) and Channel 7 (Australia), in order to promote its television series *Lost*. The Lost Experience campaign was launched by the networks in order to engage the audience during the break between the second and the third season of the show.

#### *Criteria for selecting the cases*

The two cases were selected for the following reasons:

- A number of different authors (Maymann, 2008; McClusky, 2009; Ramaswamy, 2008) and media have considered the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* campaign two good examples of how companies can use social media to engage consumers. Although Nike and ABC operate in two different industries, the two cases were selected as examples of how companies can use social media as a marketing tool. Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the goal of this research is not to compare them, but to analyse the use of social media that two big corporations have undertaken.
- The global scope of the initiatives: Although Nike Inc. and ABC are based in the US, their products are distributed and consumed internationally. The analysed marketing initiatives were Internet-based and designed for English speakers, which makes them particularly exportable to any country. Thus, *The Lost Experience* was launched by ABC in collaboration with Channel 4 (UK) and Channel 7 (Australia), and the Nike+ community gathers members from more than 160 different countries (Nike, 2007).
- Their intrinsic value: According to Stake (1995), the fact that a case is interesting itself is also a rationale for selection. The Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* are genuine and original social media marketing initiatives. First, the Nike+ community revolutionised the running experience of consumers by combining music, personal coaching and networking. Second, as an Alternate Reality Game, *The Lost Experience* was an unusual Internet-based marketing initiative and an exceptionally large cross-media endeavour.

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## **Data collection**

### *Documentary sources*

Documentation was the main technique employed for collecting data about the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience*. Thus, the authors of this thesis corroborated evidence from different documentary sources in order to shed light on the cases. As Daymon & Holloway (2002) point out, “documents consist of words and images that have been recorded without the intervention of a researcher. They are in written, printed, sound, visual and digital forms” (p. 216):

- 1) In the case of the Nike+ community, the gathered documents helped the researchers to describe the social media marketing strategy followed to create an online community for Nike consumers. The documents employed provided insight into the Nike+ community as marketing initiative, which was started by the organisation in 2006 and lasts until the present<sup>3</sup>.
- 2) The documents collected for *The Lost Experience* case helped the researches to track down the social media marketing campaign *The Lost Experience*, which started in May 2006 and lasted until September 2006.

In both cases, a wide variety of written, sound, visual, audiovisual and digital documents was employed. The main documentary sources used in the two case studies comprise: newspaper and magazine articles; corporate press releases; text and images from websites; text from Web 2.0 applications (such as Last.fm, Facebook or Twitter); blogs, podcasts, white papers, e-books, videos and TV commercials.

On the other hand, it is important to mention that the authors of this thesis attempted unsuccessfully to arrange an interview with the Marketing and PR Department at Nike Inc. in order to have a deeper insight into the Nike+ community case. Overall the researches of this study were satisfied with the amount and quality of the data collected about the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* campaign. Nevertheless, it is the researchers' believe that the Nike+ community is a complex phenomenon, whose understanding would have been more complete with the conduction of an interview with the organisation. Appendix 1 shows the questions that the researchers had prepared for their possible interview with Nike Inc.

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<sup>3</sup> November, 2009.

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*Criteria for selecting the sources*

The documentary sources employed in this research have been selected according to their (1) authenticity, (2) credibility, (3) meaning and (4) representativeness (Daymon & Holloway, 2002).

**(1) Credibility:** The authors of the present research only employed documentary sources which were “free from error or distortion” (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 219). Due to the fact that the analysed case studies were social media initiatives, Internet-based based research was the main technique followed to gather the documentary sources. Thus, during the course of their investigation, the researchers encountered information about the cases in user-generated document, such as blogs and Lost or Nike fan sites. The researches ruled out such sources, and only employed credible and solid references.

Thus, the authorship of the documentary sources was crucial to consider them to be *credible*. Therefore, the main sources employed were:

- Documents produced by the organisations responsible for the marketing initiatives analysed, such as Nike Inc, ABC, Channel 4, or the media and digital agencies employed for the initiatives (R/GA, Hi-Res!), which include corporate press releases, electronic text retrieved from websites, videos, and podcasts.
- Several articles, interviews, and videos published in the media, such as Business Week, The New York Times, The Washington Post, or Entertainment Weekly.
- White papers and articles published by different non-for-profit organisations such as the IGDA (International Game Developers Association) and The Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.
- Personal blogs and user-generated content was employed as a documentary source only whether consumers’ opinions wanted to be illustrated.

**(2) Authenticity:** As Daymon & Holloway (2002) point out, authenticity “refers to a document that is genuine, complete, reliable and of unquestioned authorship” (p. 219). In order to validate the authenticity of the documentary sources employed, the researchers always attempted to retrieve the documents from corporate official websites. Whether the documents employed were not available on websites created by the organisations involved in the project, *data triangulation* was employed. Thus, the authorship and the credibility of the documents were always corroborated by contrasting different sources. *Data triangulation* is a way to confirm data in which researchers “use multiple data sources, such as collecting data from different groups, settings or at different times” (Daymon

& Holloway, 2002, p. 99). The researchers of this study conducted data triangulation in order to validate the information collected. Thus, different sources were contrasted in order to gather all the necessary data for reconstructing the cases. For instance, in the case of *The Lost Experience* some audiovisual documents, such as TV commercials or video-podcasts, were only available on YouTube<sup>4</sup>. In order to verify the authenticity of the videos, the researchers sought for solid references (such as corporate press releases, or an interview with the creators of the show published in the media) which corroborated its authenticity and prove that those videos were produced for the campaign. Thus, a number of documents which did not meet the criteria could not have been employed, and, therefore, certain secondary actions undertaken by ABC and its partner during *The Lost Experience* campaign could not be described in this paper due to the lack of credibility of the sources.

**(3) Meaning:** It is important to consider the context in which documents were produced in order to interpret them correctly (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The researchers were cautious in following the criteria described above, since the documentary materials were used as *primary sources* for his study and not for *supplementary purposes*. Thus, by cross-checking and triangulating the data, the researchers also attempt to reinforce the validity of the analysis when interpreting the information.

**(4) Representativeness:** Finally, as to Daymon & Holloway (2002) state, it is also important to keep in mind the representativeness of the data employed, since “some of the documents may have been lost or destroyed, and others may exist but you may have no access to them” (p. 220). Therefore, throughout the present study the researchers of have indicated any gap and limitations encountered during the course of their investigation.

### **Data analysis**

As mentioned previously, a qualitative analysis was conducted on two case studies of the companies, which have used social media for marketing purposes.

Thus, Chapter 3 provides the description of the cases constructed. First, each case comprises a brief introduction on the previous social media initiatives that both companies had carried out before the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* were implemented, in order to contextualise and enlighten the reader on the actions that preceded the cases. Second, the main aspects of the

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<sup>4</sup> YouTube is a video sharing website on which users can upload and share videos ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)).

marketing initiatives, as well as most relevant actions carried out by the companies in relation with them are described. Then, the results and consequences of the initiatives are summarised at the end of each case study.

The first part of Chapter 4 discusses the use of social media in the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* in relation with the literature on social media marketing reviewed in Chapter 2, as well as according to the main conditions of postmodernity highlighted by Firat & Venkatesh (1995). Then, given the theoretical overview provided and the analysis conducted on the two cases, the researchers attempt to extend the literature on social media marketing by proposing a theoretical foundation for the relationship between social media marketing and postmodernity. Finally, the findings generated are employed to create a number of recommendations for organisations which aim to employ social media as a marketing tool in the postmodern era.

#### **1.1.2.2. Case 3: Aarhus School of Business (ASB)**

In the last part of the discussion, the researchers applied their findings to a real case study. Consequently, the social media strategy of Aarhus School of Business (ASB) was analysed in order to answer the fourth research question of this study: *How can theoretical and empirical findings of the thesis can be applied to a real life case of Aarhus School of Business?*

Thus, the authors of this thesis provide the educational institution with some suggestions, based on the recommendations defined in the previous section of the study.

#### **Sample selection**

ASB is an academic institution based in the city of Aarhus, Denmark. Founded in 1939, the Business school became a part of the University of Aarhus on January 2007. ASB confers both undergraduate and graduate degrees in a wide range of topics, such as Business Administration, Finance, Marketing, Economics, and Corporate Communication.

#### *Criteria for selecting the cases*

As master students at ASB, the authors of this thesis opted for analysing the Business school's social media strategy due to their proximity to the organisation. Thus, the researchers attempted to apply their findings to a 'real case' and, therefore, increase the contribution of their study. As

Daymon & Holloway (2002) point out, “that a particular context is *convenient* or *accessible* can make it an attractive setting to study” (p. 109). Since the authors of the thesis are not comparing how social media marketing can be used for different kind of organisations the findings of this study can be also applied to Aarhus School of Business, which is a non-profit educational institution.

### **Data collection**

Documentation was also employed in order to collect the necessary data for conducting the third case study of this thesis. Nevertheless, an interview with Nikolaj Høncke Keldorff, project manager at ASB Media (IT Department) was the technique employed to collect the primary data for the case study.

Consequently, the present study has employed a multi-method approach to data collection, since more than one technique has been used in order to gather data. Specifically, documentary sources and interviews have been the two techniques employed.

#### *Interview*

As Daymon & Holloway (2002) point out, one of the advantages of interviews is that they allow researchers to gather data within “their own social context” (p. 167). The authors of this research opted for conducting an interview in order to collect information about ASB’s social media strategy, which was only “internal” to the organisation and not accessible for the public in any other way.

Thus, a one-to-one interview was arranged with Nikolaj Høncke Keldorff, project manager at ASB Media (IT Department), which was conducted face-to-face. As it is common in qualitative studies, the researchers employed a semi-structured interview because of the flexibility that it provides (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The questions, which were contained in an interview guide, could be mainly classified as *experience* and *knowledge questions* (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). For example:

- Experience questions

*Do you choose social media application usually according to a stakeholder group you want to reach?*

*What kind of user you have in mind when getting involved with social media?*

- Knowledge questions

*What kind of challenges the social media platform brings to the school? How the school deals with that?*

*Does ASB have an official strategy for social media?*

The interview, which lasted 55 min 29s, was tape-recorded and transcribed by the researchers. Daymon & Holloway (2002) recommend researchers to transcribe their tapes, since this allows them to submerge “in the data and become sensitive to the issues of importance” (p. 179).

#### *Documentary sources*

The data collected from the interview with Nikolaj Keldorff was complemented with information retrieved from the official website of ASB (<http://www.asb.dk>), as well as corporate brochures produced by the school. Additionally, information collected from social media applications, such as Facebook, in which ASB is present was also employed as secondary data.

#### **Data analysis**

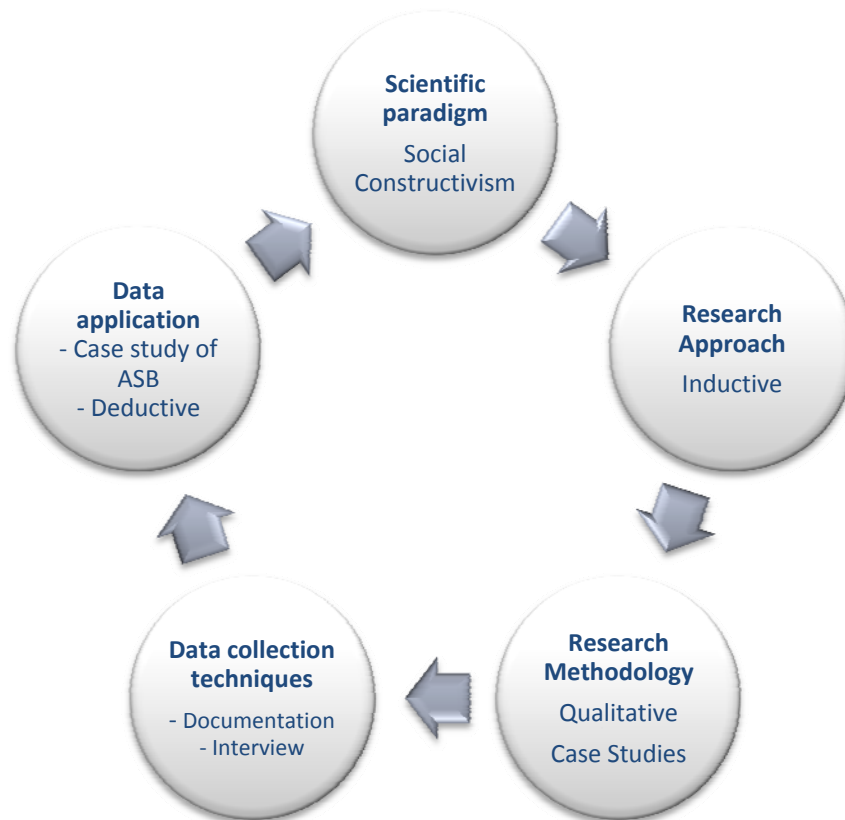
The social media strategy of ASB was analysed in order to provide some recommendations to the school, based on the previous findings of this study.

It is important to emphasise that, as students at ASB, the authors of this thesis are aware of their possible bias, which could affect the reliability of their conclusions. As qualitative researchers, the authors of this thesis recognise their own subjectivity, and agree with Daymon & Holloway (2002) on the fact that objectivity and neutrality “are impossible to achieve” (2002, p. 89). Nevertheless, the researchers attempted to approach the subject of study from the perspective of an outsider, in order to ensure the validity of this thesis.

Figure 1 summarises the methodology followed in the present study.

#### **Figure 1: The use of methodology in the case of ASB**





## 1.2. Thesis Structure

This thesis can be divided into five main parts: Introduction; (1) Methodology; (2) Literature review; (3) Analysis; (4) Discussion; and Conclusion (see Figure 2).

The first section, *Introduction*, presents the formulation of the problem statement that encouraged the authors to conduct this research.

The present section, called *Methodology*, consists of the following:

- The methodology applied, which contains the choice of research philosophy, as well as an explanation of the research strategy and the research approaches undertaken.
- The description of the thesis structure.

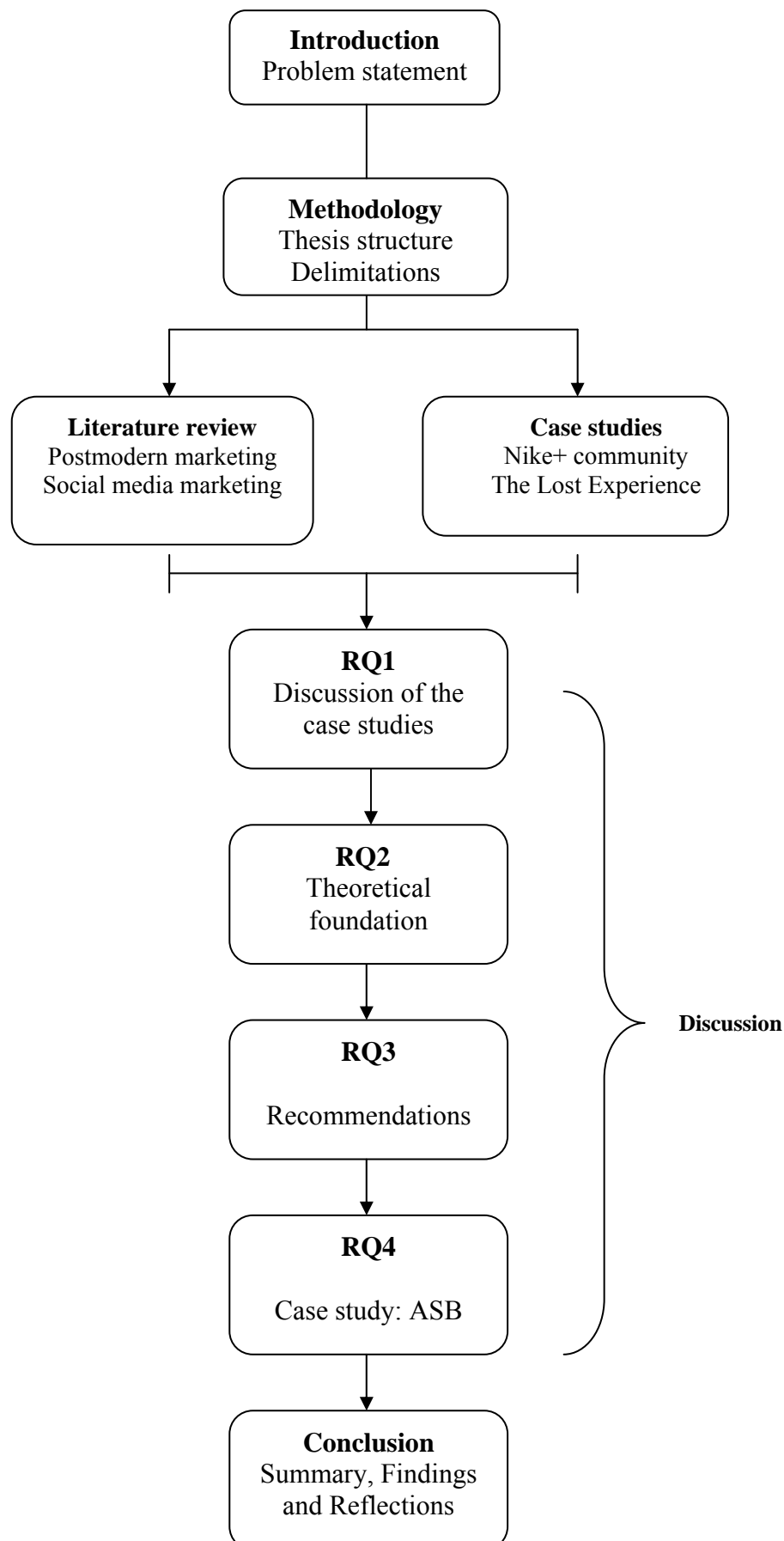
- The delimitations that the authors encountered, and which are important to keep in mind while reading this paper.

The following chapters illustrate the different stages that were undertaken during the course of the research conducted, before arriving to the final findings and conclusions. Thus, the literature review provided in Chapter 2 presents the main theories and relevant texts that were considered in order to develop an understanding of the nature and structure of study. The literature review of this paper includes the main classical and foundational work on postmodern marketing and social media marketing.

Chapter 3 presents the two first case studies: the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience*. The cases are analysed as it has been described in section 1.1.2. *Research Methodology*. Thus, in each case the documentary sources gathered during this investigation will be put together in order to provide: (1) a short introduction on some of the social media marketing initiatives previously carried out by the company under discussion; (2) a general description of the actions carried out in each initiative, as well as its main characteristics; and (3) relevant information on the success of the marketing initiative.

Chapter 4 consists of the discussion of all the theoretical and empirical findings discovered in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, and the application of them to a “real” case. Consequently, the chapter is based on the findings derived from the former chapters: (1) the empirical discussion of the cases of Nike+ and *The Lost Experience* campaign in the context of the postmodern era; (2) the combination of the findings gathered from the case studies and the theories of postmodern marketing and social media; (3) the recommendations how to use social media marketing to communicate with postmodern consumers; and (4) the application of previously provided recommendations to a case of Aarhus School of Business.

Finally, the last part of this study, called *Conclusion*, summarises the contribution of this paper to knowledge and practice, restates its findings, and propose some recommendations for further research.

**Figure 2: Thesis structure**

### 1.3. Literature and Theoretical Application

The literature review in this thesis can be divided according to the two main subjects of study: postmodern marketing and social media marketing.

Thus, the first part of the literature review presents an introduction to postmodernity based on the work of Firat & Venkatesh (1993; 1995), and Giddens (1991). It is important to emphasise the relevance of the five postmodern conditions, provided by Firat & Venkatesh, for the purpose of this thesis. The conditions, presented in their article *Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption* (1995), has been employed throughout this investigation in order to conduct the analysis of the two case studies, as well as generalise to theoretical propositions and concepts.

Additionally, Cova (1996; 1997; 1999; Cova & Cova 2002) and Brown (1993; 1999a; 1999b), have been the primary authors employed to describe the implications of postmodernity to marketing. Cova's theories (1996; 1997; 1999; Cova & Cova 2002) have provided an insight into the communal aspect of postmodern marketing and enlightened the researchers on important concepts, such as *tribal marketing* and *linking value*.

Furthermore, the work of Simmons (2008), Firat & Dholakia (2006) as well as Protect & Kitchen (2002) have been included to provide an extended view of postmodern marketing and explain the main concepts associated with this approach to the discipline.

On the subject of social media marketing, Jaokar *et al.* (2009), Weber (2007), Gillin (2007; 2008), Mangfold & Faulds (2009), and Scott (2007) have been the main authors used to describe the concepts of social media and social media marketing, as well as their main characteristics.

Moreover, writings and studies by selected authors have been used to describe the most common social media marketing strategies. Thus, the work of Kent (2008), Retterberg (2008), Weil (2006) and Demopoulos (2006) have been applied to explain *corporate blogging*; the work of Sicilia & Palazón (2008) have contributed to illustrate the phenomenon of *virtual communities*; Percival (2008), and Holzner (2009) have been included to provide an overview on *MySpace marketing* and *Facebook marketing*; and the work of authors, such as Karpinski (2009), or Carter (2009), has been used to explain the use of *Twitter* for marketing purposes. Furthermore, Grönroos (1994; 1996;

1997; 2007) was employed in order to explore the similarities between social media marketing and relationship marketing.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that less orthodox text and studies, such as e-books and whitepapers, have been employed in order to supplement the literature review on the topic of social media, such as the work of Maymann (2007), iCrossing (2007) and Wilson (2000).

#### **1.4. Limitations**

There are some limitations of the present study that should be considered.

First, it is important to bear in mind that the findings and recommendations for companies presented in this study are based on the analysis of two case studies. The problem of generalisation is common in qualitative studies, which “are not supposed to be representative of a larger population, yet a common challenge is that they are too restricted in their conclusions” (Daymon & Holloway, 2002, p. 7).

Similarly, the *theoretical generalisation* conducted and the *generated theory* are only based on the analysis undertaken on the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience*. Therefore, further research, such as an approach of grounded theory, could help to build solidier propositions and theoretical foundation in social media marketing from a postmodern perspective.

Third, this study presents a reconstruction of the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* campaign as it was perceived by the researchers. Thus, as it is normal in case studies, the authors of this research described certain aspects about the cases analysed and omitted others (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Additionally, since the primary data collected for constructing the two cases came from documentary sources, there could be gaps in the narrative of the cases due to the existence of unknown information for the researchers (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). Thus, during the course of their investigation the researches could have failed to spot certain documentary sources, or simply not have access to them.

Fourth, as it was mentioned previously, the researchers did not manage to conduct an interview with the Marketing and PR Department at Nike Inc. Although the information gathered through the

process of documentation was adequate, the interview would have supplemented the data collected and reinforced the findings of this thesis.

Finally, as the students of Aarhus School of Business, this study is subject to the bias of its authors who could be reflected on the analysis and the recommendations based on the social media strategy of ASB. Despite the fact that the researchers tried to distant themselves and be as neutral as possible, as stated by Daymon & Holloway (2002), the possibility to be bias still remains.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Postmodern marketing

*“...many marketers might be tempted to dismiss the whole postmodern project as an unnecessary distraction, a passing intellectual fad. While such sentiments are understandable, they overlook two important facts. First, marketing and postmodernism are already tightly interwoven. ... Second, just as postmodernism has often been described as a crisis of representation, ... so too many commentators on the current marketing scene contend that our discipline is in the throes of a very serious intellectual crisis.”* (Brown, 1999a, p. 27-28)

As Brown states, the marketing discipline is highly influenced by postmodernity. This first section of the literature review provides a theoretical background for understanding the postmodern era and its implications for marketing communications.

#### 2.1.1. Short introduction to postmodernity

Postmodernity evolved as a criticism of modernity<sup>5</sup> (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Brown, 1999a). According to The Oxford English Dictionary (2008) postmodernism can be defined as:

*“The state, condition, or period of subsequent to that which is modern; spec. In architecture, the arts, the literature, politics, etc., any of various styles, concepts, or points of view involving a conscious departure from modernism, esp. When characterised by a rejection of ideology and theory in favour of a plurality of values and techniques. Also in extended use in general contexts, freq. used ironically”* (Oxford Dictionaries, 2008).

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<sup>5</sup> The modern era started in the XVI-XVII century and lasted until the end of XX century (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

As Cova (1996) points out, some scholars and managers refuse to take postmodern conditions into account, due to its complexity or abstractness. As Hudson (1988) states, sometimes authors refer to postmodernity as a *myth* because:

- There is no “universal framework for evaluation” (p. 187).
- Postmodern era sometimes forgets “natural as well as logical necessity” (p. 188).
- Some authors even claim that it is “technically improper” (p. 188).

Nevertheless, just as an American consultant James Ogilvy, “Postmodernism is too important to be left to French philosophers alone” (in Cova, 1996, p. 494).

Rather than *postmodernity*, British sociologist Giddens (1991) prefers the term *late* or *high modernity*, as he claims that society still lives in a modern era: “the phenomena that some have dubbed ‘postmodern’ are, in Giddens’ terms, usually just the more extreme instances of a fully developed modernity” (Gauntlett, 2002). According to Giddens (1991), modernity is the

*“equivalent to ‘the industrialised world’ ... I take industrialism to refer to the social relations implied in the widespread use of material power and machinery in production process. ... A second dimension is capitalism ... a system of commodity production involving both competitive product markets and the commodification of labour power”* (Giddens, 1991, p. 15).

The postmodern era has had an effect on almost every aspect of intellectual life, from architecture and arts to theology and economics (Brown, 1993; 1999a). Postmodernists believe that:

- Culture has a huge influence on reality, which is not just “the product of science and technology” (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 240), and it is not always based on reason (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).
- Science and technology are not able to provide a solution for all the problems that humanity has to face. As Firat & Venkatesh (1995) state, science has not been able to establish ethical order or rationality. According to them, the promise made by modernists that science would save the society is simply not feasible.
- Reality is not that simple and the categories that were established by modernists do not fit it. The world cannot be decreased to “simple dichotomous categories: subject/object, male/female, producer/consumer, culture/nature, signified/signifier, Occident/Orient” (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 240). Postmodernists avoid comparing or establishing oppositions.



Postmodern human beings have many identities or '*faces*', which are constantly changing (Gergen, 1995).

- Consumers do not have to obey the rational order of the universe, which was so endorsed by modernists, and they can construct their own reality throughout consumption (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). According to Proctor & Kitchen (2002), *hyperreality* is the most common characteristic of postmodernity, which allows postmodern human beings to experience a “simulated reality” (p. 147) and construct their own past, present or future. Consumption is also a production or “value-producing activity” (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 242) (See *section 2.1.3.*).
- According to Giddens (1991), social life in postmodernity can be described by three aspects: (1) *separation of time and space*, (2) *disembedding mechanisms*, and (3) *institutional reflexivity* Table 2 describes each of these three elements.

Firat & Venkatesh (1995) state that postmodernity is inseparable from consumption and marketing communications, and list the main conditions of postmodern consumption (see Table 3). Fragmentation, doubt and denial of universal truth, together with the juxtaposition of the opposites are the main characteristics of postmodernity (Cova, 1996; Christensen, Torp, & Firat, 2005). According to Cova (1996), postmodern societies are highly fragmented because human beings are highly individualistic and attempt to differentiate themselves from others through consumption. At the same time, postmodern individuals seek affiliation with like-minded people in a “desperate search for social links” (Cova, 1996, p. 495) who share the same or similar “life styles, new moral beliefs and new consumption practices” (Cova, 1996, p. 495).

**Table 2: Three aspects of postmodern<sup>6</sup> social life**

<i>Separation of time and space</i>	<i>Disembedding mechanisms:</i>	<i>Institutional reflexivity</i>
“The condition for the articulation of social relations across wide spans of time-space, up to and including global systems” (p. 20).	“Consist of symbolic tokens and expert systems (these together = abstract systems). Disembedding mechanisms separate interaction from the particularities of locales” (p. 20)	“The regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation” (p. 20).
“Modern social organisation presumes the precise coordination of the actions of many human beings physically absent from one another; the ‘when’ of these actions is directly connected to the ‘where’, but not, as in pre-modern epochs, via mediation of place” (p. 17).	“Symbolic tokens are media of exchange which have standard value, and thus are interchangeable across a plurality of contents. The prime example, and the most pervasively important, is money”. (p. 18)  “ <i>Expert systems</i> are deploying modes of technical knowledge which have validity independent of the practitioners and clients who make use of them” (p. 18).	“Reflexivity ... undermines the certainty of knowledge, even in the core domains of natural science. Science depends, not on the inductive accumulation of proofs, but on the methodological principle of doubt”. “A scientific is open to revision” (p. 21).

Source: Taken and adjusted from (Giddens, 1991, p. 20)

<sup>6</sup> Originally in the text, Giddens use the term “modern”.

Table 3: Postmodern conditions and their main themes *Source: Taken from (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 252)*

Hyperreality	Fragmentation	Reversal of production and consumption	Decentred subject	Juxtaposition of opposites
Reality as part of symbolic world and constructed rather than given.	Consumption experiences are multiple, disjointed.	Postmodernism is basically a culture of consumption, while modernism represents a culture of production.	The following modernist notions of the subject are called into question:	Pastiche as the underlying principle of juxtaposition.
Signifier/Signified (structure) replaced by the notion of endless signifiers.	Human subject has a divided self.	Abandonment of the notion that production creates value while consumption destroys it.	Human subject as a self –knowing, independent agent.	Consumption experiences are not meant to reconcile differences and paradoxes but to allow them to exist freely.
The emergence of symbolic and the spectacles as the basis of reality.	Terms such as “authentic self” and “centred connections” are questionable.	Sign value replaces exchange value as the basis of consumption.	Human subject as a cognitive subject.	Acknowledges that fragmentation, rather than unification, is the basis of consumption.
The idea that marketing is constantly involved in the creation of <i>more</i> real than real.	Lack of commitment to any (central) theme.	Consumer paradox:	Human subject as a unified subject.	
The blurring of the distinction between real and non-real.	Abandonment of history origin, and context.	Consumers are active producers of symbols and signs if consumption, as marketers are.	Postmodernist notions of human subject:	
	<i>Marketing is an activity that fragments consumption signs and environments and reconfigures them through style and fashion.</i>	Consumers are also objects in the marketing process, while products become active agents.	Human subject is historically and culturally constructed.	
	Fragmentation as the basis for creation of body culture.		Language, not cognition, is the basis for subjectivity.	
			Instead of a cognitive subject, we have a communicative subject.	
			Authentic self is displaced by made-up self.	
			Rejection of modernist subject as a male subject.	

### 2.1.2. *Why does traditional marketing not work anymore?*

According to The American Marketing Association, “marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2007). This definition, which is often cited as an example of the traditional approach to the discipline, compresses the essence of the traditional 4P’s of the marketing mix (price, place, product, and promotion)<sup>7</sup>. This traditional approach has dominated the practice and theory of marketing for decades (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2008; Grönroos, 1994; Hougaard & Bjerre, 2003; Brown, 1999b), and has been viewed as the “*economic* exchange framework” (Firat & Dholakia, 2006, p. 125) between a company and its customers.

Nonetheless, over the past few years a number of authors, such as Hougaard & Bjerre (2003), Grönroos (2007), Harwood, Garry, & Broderick (2008), Brown & Hayes (2008), Brown (1993), have stated that the traditional 4P’s of the marketing mix no longer completely fulfil the needs and obligations of the discipline. In today’s world, organisations face a number of challenges that make it necessary to think about marketing in a different way (Grönroos, 2007). Some of the aspects that are changing marketers’ point of view to marketing are the result of postmodernity will be explored further in this section.

Organisations need to stay open to the environment in which they operate. Thus, the attempt to centralize marketing and communication (contact management<sup>8</sup>) can cause disturbance, since it does not allow flexibility, it is not time efficient, and it increases bureaucracy in the organisation (Christensen, Firat, & Torp, 2008). Postmodern conditions imply that the environment is turbulent, and they require organisations to be creative, fast, flexible and very open to changes (Christensen *et al.*, 2008). Even though integration and some certain amount of control is required for the normal existence of organisations, Christensen *et al.* (2005; 2008) state that sometimes the environment is simply too complex to reach that.

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<sup>7</sup> The marketing mix is “the set of controllable marketing tools (product, price, place and promotion) that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market” (Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders, & Wong, 2008, p. 49).

<sup>8</sup> The need to control every possible communication channel in which a consumer may have contact with a brand directly (Duncan, 2005).

Consumers are constantly attacked with countless promotional messages in various communication channels every day. Therefore, it is important that an organisation sends aligned messages to its target audience and ‘speaks with one voice’. This can facilitate a better perception of a company’s communication, and make marketing messages more effective and consistent (Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Bergh, 2007; Kitchen, Brignell, Jones, & Li, 2004; Duncan, 2005). The main difficulty is that any organisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has multiple complex stakeholder groups, which are related to each other and whose members may belong to more than one group. According to Pelsmacker *et al.* (2007) a company does not need to convey identical messages to every stakeholder group, but messages have to be adjusted to their expectations or wants. They also point out that the messages have to be aligned with the corporate mission and identity, which should “provide a mechanism for identifying and avoiding message conflicts when communicating with these overlapping and complex target groups” (Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2007, p. 26).

On the other hand, postmodern customers are free of the supplier dictate. Since they are bombarded by thousands of consumer choices every day, suppliers cannot ‘force’ them into buying their products or services (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). It has become difficult to understand or predict consumers’ buyer behaviour, since they are not sure about their consumption wishes and desires, but only about their aversions and dislikes (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Organisations focusing on the average consumers (or applying traditional market mass segmentation and positioning) would miss the opportunity to meet the needs of postmodern individuals who are not stable, whose notions and lifestyles are frequently shifting. Thus, the assembly of all controversial wishes, ideas and concerns of a postmodern consumer into one integrated approach (suggested, for instance, by integrated marketing communication theories) can substantially reduce the attractiveness of a firm’s proposal (Christensen *et al.*, 2005; Addis & Podesta, 2005).

According to Firat & Dholakia (2006), hyperreality is one of the issues that traditional marketing has to face. In the postmodern era reality is something what is commonly constructed and shared, but not universal (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). The role of traditional marketing “is simply to liberate or realize the needs” (Firat & Dholakia, 2006, p. 136) of consumers. However, postmodern conditions are shaping the power balance between consumers and companies. According to Firat & Dholakia (2006), they became more like partners in the process of needs and meanings creation, thus, instead of striving for consumer *satisfaction*, organisations should switch their focus to *empowerment*.

Postmodern individuals' lifestyle is highly fragmentized, and consumers usually hold different roles in the society which may contradict each other (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2005) (e.g. a serious businessman becomes a biker after work). Thus, human beings live in constant doubt and uncertainty; their life is full of conflicting ideas; and it impossible to forecast what their next steps would be (Christensen *et al.*, 2005; Brown, 1993; Cova, 1996). Postmodernity has brought a higher level of consumer involvement with a brand, since they independently create and reshape the original meaning of a product or service (Cova, 1996; Firat & Dholakia, 2006). On the contrary to what it is imposed by the traditional marketing, professionals should not try to enforce the control of the meaning of the messages they sent to consumers about their brands or companies (Christensen *et al.*, 2005).

Marketers have always viewed the act of purchasing as the final activity in the economic exchange between companies and their customers (Arnould *et al.*, 2005; Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Brown & Hayes, 2008). For instance, Brown & Hayes (2008) claim that “the marketing mix has traditionally focused on preparing prospective customers (through awareness, familiarity, comfort and knowledge) for their walk down the Sales Avenue” (p. 140). This brings another challenge to traditional marketing because consumption is viewed as continuous “process of transforming the product from the very moment that a consumer takes possession of the product” (Firat & Dholakia, 2006, p. 138). Thus, companies have to involve their consumers into product development and make them contributors to the production process (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) (see more in *section 2.1.3.*).

Overall, the marketing specialists have to switch their focus from short-term profits to relationship marketing, from mass communication to more specialised communication for a narrower target of audiences (Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2007). According to Pelsmacker *et al.* (2007), customers' seduction times are over, and now companies should focus on earning their loyalty and building relationships with them (see *section 2.3.3.3.*).

### ***2.1.3. Implications of postmodernity to marketing***

The postmodern approach has shifted managers' and academicians' views about marketing and management theories (Cova, 1996). First, postmodernity has brought companies new marketing and

communication challenges, and consequently organisations have had to adjust themselves to these new circumstances. According to Simmons (2008), marketing is trapped between four conditions (the 4 C's) of postmodernity: change, complexity, chaos, and contradiction. Second, the postmodern individual is not committed to brands, a single lifestyle, and one identity or belief system anymore (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Cova, 1996, 1999; Cova & Cova, 2002; Gergen, 1995; Simmons, 2008). Third, the postmodern era has considerably influenced the power balance between a company and its consumers (Cova, 1996; Firat & Dholakia, 2006). Marketing theories promised companies to help them to control the meaning of their brands, yet the postmodern approach implies that it is rather impossible to have complete power over the meaning its brand conveys to consumers (Addis & Podesta, 2005; Christensen *et al.*, 2005). The aforementioned challenges will be addressed more extensively in the following paragraphs.

### **Chaos, confusion and juxtaposition of the opposites**

The best way to describe postmodern marketing would be to look at it as a marketing that has to operate between the opposite extremes: *one-to-one marketing* and *tribal marketing*, *image marketing* and *experience marketing*, *use value* and *linking value*, *transfer of meaning* and *co-creation of meaning*, *database* and *ethnography*, *communication* and *participation* (Cova, 1996, p. 498). One of the most difficult tasks for marketing practitioners is to customize the message they want to send to consumers and align it to all with the contradictions that postmodern consumers present. In the postmodern era, consumers are individualistic, yet simultaneously they crave for a sense of belonging to a social group (usually more than one group or a tribe<sup>9</sup>) (Cova & Cova, 2002). According to Cova (1999; 1996), and Cova & Cova (2002), consumers are not that interested “in the objects of consumptions” (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 595), but more into “the social links and identities that come with them” (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 595). Therefore, companies are challenged to supply consumers with products and services that are more individualistic, but at the same time “encourage social interactions in communities” (Cova, 1996, p. 496) and provide social value to them.

### **Fragmentation**

“Fragmentation of markets into smaller and smaller segments, each with its complement of carefully positioned products, is everywhere apparent” (Brown, 1999a, p. 34). As a result of this

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<sup>9</sup> “Tribe is the community of emotion and passion.” (Cova & Cova, 2002, p. 598)

postmodern phenomenon, consumers have many different lifestyles and are constantly adapting the meaning of their purchased products or services to their own needs (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). The variety of purchasing decisions that consumers have to make causes their confusion in choice, but not in “what they do not want” (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002, p. 147). Firat & Venkatesh (1993) argue that postmodernity will not change or have much impact on product offerings, yet communication and marketing programmes have to be more creative, innovative, and adjusted to various lifestyles. This requires organisations to focus on image, branding, positioning, and establishment; while keeping the relationship with their customers and viewing them as company’s partners and contributors (Christensen *et al.*, 2005; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002; Firat & Dholakia, 2006). Additionally, Firat & Dholakia (2006) point out that consumers have become less focused on the “material values” (p. 140) of the product and more attracted by “the experiential values of activities” (p. 140).

It is important to emphasise that fragmentation should not be viewed as a threat to organisations, since it can provide them with new opportunities. According to Proctor & Kitchen (2002), the fact that companies are being forced to give up mass segmentation and marketing enables them to concentrate on particular consumer segments, which show different preferences from average consumers. This makes easier for companies to take customers with different preferences into consideration (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002).

### **Hyperreality, symbolism, and control of a company’s messages**

Hyperreality also plays a big role in postmodern individual’s consumption activities. “Hyperreality is the becoming real of what initially was or is a simulation or ‘hype’” (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993, p. 229). As Firat & Venkatesh (1993) explain, postmodern individuals tend to separate products from their ‘actual’ meaning and attach to them new characteristics, which usually are not common to them<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, Cova (1996) believes that most consumption takes place not because of the utilitarian meaning or value<sup>11</sup> of a product or a service, but due to the symbolic value and experiences that it provides to a consumer. In postmodernity, consumers create their own meanings for a consumption object with the help of the fashion system, advertising channels and their own

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<sup>10</sup> Firat and Venkatesh provide the example of toothpaste, which through the advertising system can get “symbolic meanings, such as sexiness, beauty, happiness, attractiveness, etc.” (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993, p. 230)

<sup>11</sup> Utilitarian meaning: “perceived usefulness of a product in terms of its ability to perform functional or physical tasks” (Arnould *et al.*, 2005, s. 127).



consumption rituals<sup>12</sup> (McCracken, 1986). Although marketers tend to think that the act of purchasing is central in the consumption process, the most important part of it starts after the purchase, when people give meaning to consumption objects and perform rituals while using them (McCracken, 1986; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

Consequently, companies are not able to fully control the meaning of their brand once it is out in the market, and they can only try to shape it through advertising and image marketing (Cova, 1996; Christensen *et al.*, 2008; Firat & Dholakia, 2006). Furthermore, the postmodern individual is very concerned about the symbolic meaning of the goods and the social links they provide (Cova, 1996; 1999). Therefore, postmodern companies need to demonstrate that they are ready to negotiate the meaning behind their offers (products and brands); engage in playful dialogue; encourage discussions; and support “*navigate experiences*” which are produced by customers themselves and not ‘given’ or ‘provided’ by an organisation (Christensen *et al.*, 2005). Nevertheless, the fact that companies are allowing consumers to contribute to the meaning creation of their products does not imply that they are fully losing control of it. In fact, according to Christensen *et al.* (2005), companies that are aware of consumers’ constructed meanings can achieve more control over the process, or at least as much as it is possible in postmodern conditions.

Marketing has to follow certain rules that are important to postmodern consumers. Cova (1996) suggests that marketing should be *experience-based*, *interactive*, provide *connectivity* and *creativity*, be highly *involving*, and encourage *participation* in the creation of meaning process. The task of marketing is to engage customers into a playful and imaginative process of meaning creation that, according to Christensen *et al.* (2005), can be brought through networking and negotiation. Thus, consumption meanings are the result of both company’s advertising and consumer’s involvement (Cova, 1996; McCracken, 1986; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

### **The control of the environment**

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<sup>12</sup> According to McCracken (1986) the meaning from goods to consumers is transferred through four rituals: ***Exchange Rituals***: when one person buys a good to the other person; ***Possession rituals***: the rituals that help people to declare the ownership of a good (cleaning, washing, comparing, bragging, etc.); ***Grooming rituals***: a consumer or a good can be groomed before going out or for a public display; ***Divestment rituals***: rituals that help people to “remove” the signs of previous possessor of a good, if it is not new, or preparing a good to be given out.

Given that the postmodern era brings instability and several new challenges, Christensen *et al.* (2008) state that centralised communications can be really difficult to implement. Therefore, companies should use more flexible forms of control. Thus, instead of trying to control the environment with the help of a tightly centralised communication and marketing programme, some authors suggest exploiting the unstable and chaotic environment that organisations need to operate in (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002; Christensen *et al.*, 2005; Firat & Dholakia, 2006). According to Proctor & Kitchen (2002), companies which will embrace the instability and “provide the possibilities for critical play for chaos and disorder will empower contemporary consumers, give them greater control over the order they wish to see in their lives, and simultaneously benefit marketing organisations” (p. 149).

### **Value creation through consumption**

According to Firat & Venkatesh (1995), companies should perceive consumption as a value creation activity, use this perspective in marketing communications, and bear in mind that consumers are the ones that add some value and meaning to their brands. This could be exemplified by social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (see *section 2.2.4.3. and 2.2.4.4.* for a description of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), which would be merely empty platforms with no value if consumers had not created the content on them.

Cova (1996) argues that marketing can help support and strengthen the identity of postmodern consumers, since it is so important to them. Cova (1996) encourages companies in the postmodern age to create the relationship with its consumers while using:

- IT: Placing messages and targeting audiences online may be easier than in traditional media. On the Internet companies can easily locate websites, forums, or social media platforms that are used by their target consumers. For instance, a music record label company could promote its albums through the social media platform Last.fm. Thus, using the data Last.fm that acquires about their users' preferences, the record company could directly target consumers who could be interested in a particular artist or genre of music.
- Relationship marketing: a relationship marketing approach facilitates the attraction and maintenance of postmodern customers, whose actions do not fit the patterns of mass marketing or cannot be easily forecasted (see *section 2.3.3.3.*).

- Personally customized products or services: tailoring a company's products and services to the preferences of its customers helps to establish good relationships between the organisation and its clients, whilst helping to meet and satisfy their needs better.

Overall, while using marketing in postmodernity, organisations should take a new direction and:

- Promote a vision that it is able to deliver *fashionable* and *trendy* products, which will stay popular because the company is constantly working on them (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002).
- Show consumers that they are ready to meet their constantly shifting desires and adjust to various lifestyles (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002).
- Switch from integrated marketing communication to efficient communication (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002), from central and disciplined marketing to collaborative, subtle and multifaceted marketing (Firat & Dholakia, 2006).
- Observe the environment and establish conversations with its stakeholders (Christensen *et al.*, 2005).
- Construct communication and marketing messages according to the demands of consumers (*outside-in approach*) (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002).
- Become what Christensen *et al.* (2008) call the “*sophisticated observer*”, and learn to notice delicate changes or trends in the markets that are overlooked by competitors.
- Not be afraid of exploiting opposing and conflicting symbols or topics in their brand communication, as this can help to attain and maintain customers' interest into company's brand (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002).

Overall, postmodernity has forced marketers to rethink their marketing and communication strategies, become more creative, and attempt to address all the juxtapositions of the postmodern consumer. Market professionals need to address consumers as active producers of symbolic meaning to brands, and to remember that consumption, brand and image take a significant place in consumers' life and their self-identity creation process.

## 2.2. Social Media

### **2.2.1. What is it?**

Due to the popularization of the Internet and the development of Web 2.0 technologies, web applications such as MySpace, Twitter or Facebook have become relevant social phenomena over the past few years. Every day, millions of people use the Internet for communication, collaboration, sharing information, and entertainment purposes.

Social media can be defined as “*the democratization of content and the shift in the role people play in the process of reading and disseminating information (and thus creating and sharing content)*” (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009, p. VII). According to the digital marketing company iCrossing (2007), social media allows the user to *participate* in the creation of the content; it is *open* to comments and criticism; it offers easy to access information; it facilitates *conversation* and *community* formation; and it links to other websites, posts, and articles. In other words, it provides *connectedness* (iCrossing, 2007).

Basically, social media is a software which helps people to exchange content with others online (Demopoulos, 2006). Blogs, forums, social networks, and wikis are examples of different social media. Appendix 2 provides a classification of the most common forms of social media based on the work of several authors.

### **2.2.2. Technological, social, and business aspects of Social Media.**

Technologically, social media is intrinsically connected to the capabilities that have contributed to the development and evolution of web-based communities, hosted services, and web-applications (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). Social Media is the product of “Web 2.0”, a term that has been coined to refer to what is perceived as a second generation of web development and web design (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). As opposed to the first generation of websites (Web 1.0), which were static, Web 2.0 facilitates interactivity and the creation of user-generated content (UGC)<sup>13</sup>: text, video, audio, and pictures produced by regular citizens and posted publicly on the Internet (Sankar &

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<sup>13</sup> Also referred to as consumer-generated media (CGM).

Bouchard, 2009; Weber, 2007). Thus, on the online shop Amazon<sup>14</sup>, for instance, users are allowed to rate products, keep a wish list of them, post comments, participate in discussions, read other users' reviews, and receive recommendations based on their previous purchases and searches.

Therefore, Web 2.0 technologies facilitate interaction and communication to individuals accessing to the Internet. From a sociological point of view, the emergence of social media involves a user evolution from passive to active citizens which is usually described as a 'revolution' as well as a 'democratization of information and media' (Dearstyne, 2005; Maymann, 2008; Bowman & Willis, 2003). As opposed to traditional media, social media involves a shift in the way people discover, read, and share news: from broadcasting to a many-to-many communication model (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). As Maymann (2007) points out, "nobody needs to know anything about HTML coding, or paying for web hosting to use the internet as their platform" (Maymann, 2008, p. 11).

Blogs are usually cited as example of how social media allows consumer participation and communication as well as the rise of opinion leaders and influencers (Gillin, 2007). According to Sankar & Bouchard (2009), all around the world 384 million people (77 per cent of Internet users) read blogs and 184 million of users have started a blog themselves. Consequently, authors have started talking about "citizen journalism" (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009; Bowman & Willis, 2003), and there has been much debate about whether bloggers are a new type of journalists or the journalists of the future (Kent, 2008; Porter, Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007).

Overall, the interaction between users online and the appearance of new influencers have implications for businesses. Conversations about companies, brands and products are taking place on the cyberspace, and a type of written word-of-mouth (WOM) is generated from the communication between members of a consumer community (Shang, Chen, & Liao, 2006). Consequently, organisations are losing control over their channels of communication (Maymann, 2008; Weber, 2007), and marketing and PR professionals have started to consider social media as part of their communications strategies (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009). Thus, "social media marketing" emerges.

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<sup>14</sup> Amazon.com is an online retailer of a wide range of items such as books, movies, music, games, and electronics (www.amazon.com).

### 2.2.3. *Social Media Marketing.*

#### 2.2.3.1. *Social Media Marketing: Definition and objectives*

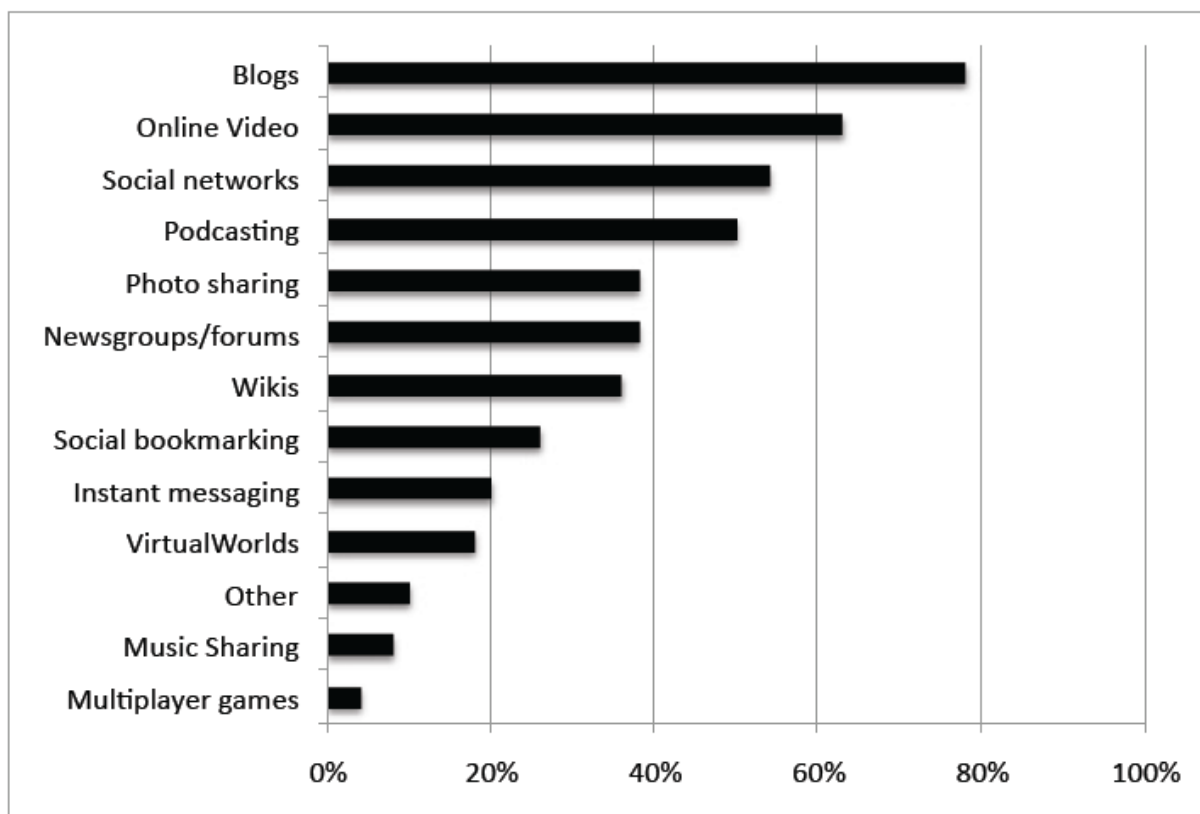
Social media has been broadly used for multiple marketing and communication purposes by private and public organisations. Companies appear to be expending considerable resources on social media campaigns and increasing their use of this new medium to attract customers, indicating that they are finding value in the practice (Maymann, 2008). As authors Scoble & Israel (2006) predict, in the future, a business that does not blog will be viewed as suspicious by the public. As a result of its popularity among practitioners, numerous business books and whitepapers have been published on social media marketing. Nevertheless, despite the growing popularity of its practice, academic research on the topic is still limited.

Social media marketing can be defined as “an interaction with a set of online social media conversations from marketing perspective, based on converged media (since conversations can span both technologies and the media)” (Jaokar *et al.*, 2009). According to The Society for New Communications Research, 57 per cent of communication professionals states that social media is becoming more valuable for their activities, while 27 per cent reports that social media is a core element of their communications strategy (Carrabis, Cass, Gillin, Natch, & Peverill-Conti, 2008). Some of the most common social media used by organisations in order to accomplish their marketing objectives are blogs, online video, social network and broadcasting. Figure 3 shows a ranking of social media tools used by organisations.

As Weber (2007) indicates, social media marketing may be utilized in order to achieve several marketing objectives such as:

- *“Improving customer relationships.*
- *Improving channel relationships.*
- *Building market share.*
- *Building brand awareness.*
- *Inducing product trial.*
- *Boosting sales revenue from specific goods and services.*
- *Improving marketing return on investment.*
- *Building awareness of and involvement in charitable or civic activities.*
- *Increasing awareness of specific issues (energy conservation, environmental protection, and the like).”*

Weber (2007, p. 115)

**Figure 3: Ranking of social media channels used by organisations<sup>15</sup>**

*Source: A research study by the Society for New Communication (Carrabis et al., 2008).*

On the other hand, some authors have more sophisticated suggestions. Gillin (2008), for instance, recommends a different type of social media depending on the business goal that an organisation attempts to meet (see Table 4) (Gillin, 2008).

**Table 4: Gillin's (2008) recommendations for Social Marketing**

<sup>15</sup> Results obtained after asking respondents which of the following online tools had their organisation used in at least one marketing campaign. The sample for the survey was 297 communications professionals, who represented a wide range of industries (See Carrabis et al., 2008).

Business Goal	Appropriate social media tools						
	Blog	Podcast	Video	Social Network	Private Community	Customer Review Engine	Virtual world
Build customer community	•		•	•	•	•	•
Counter negative publicity	•	•	•			•	
Crisis management	•	•	•	•		•	•
Customer conversation	•			•	•		•
Expose employee talent	•	•	•		•		•
Generate website traffic	•		•			•	
Humanize the company	•	•	•		•		•
Market research/focus group testing	•			•	•	•	•
Media relations	•	•	•			•	•
Generate new product ideas	•		•	•	•		•
Product promotion	•	•	•	•		•	•
Product support/customer service	•	•	•		•		
Product/service feedback	•			•	•		
Recruit brand advocates	•		•	•	•		•
Sales leads	•	•	•	•		•	•

Source: taken from (Gillin, 2008, p. 24)

#### **2.2.3.2. Characteristics of Social Media Marketing.**

Although the Internet could be simply considered another channel to broadcast marketing messages to several audiences, authors coincide on warning practitioners about the differences that are involved. According to them, due to the democratic nature of social media, a traditional marketing approach would not deliver favourable results. Therefore, new models are proposed instead of the ‘Old Marketing’ (Weber, 2007), the ‘marketing model of mass media’ (Maymann, 2008) or the ‘Old Rules of Marketing’ (Scott, 2007). Table 5 shows Weber’s (2007) juxtaposition of the two different models: traditional marketing (‘Old Marketing’) versus social media marketing (‘New Marketing’).

Thus, as opposed to other one-way communication strategies, in social media marketing:

- Companies pursue dialogue and the establishment of long-term relationships with current and potential consumers via the Internet (Weber, 2007).



- Traditional segmentation techniques (geographical, gender, age, or social) cannot be applied to this new medium, because on the Internet consumers tend to group themselves by attitudes and interests (Weber , 2007).
- While the rest of channels traditionally used for corporate marketing communications purposes only allow customers to talk to corporations, social media also facilitate customer-to-customer communication. This makes social media a '*hybrid element of the promotion mix*' (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).
- Due to the '*democratization of information and media*' that social media has caused (Maymann, 2008), on the Internet companies cannot have complete control over the content of the message, their brands, and the communication process (Scott, 2007; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Some authors point out that the higher the level of consumer control is, the higher the level of engagement with a company, a brand or a product (Maymann, 2008). Consumers become active subjects, since they are able to participate in online forums, write their own blogs and comment on others, become and follow opinion leaders, boycott brands, broadcast videos and audios, link and tag information, and share content with others.
- Word-of-mouth, also called "word-of-mouse" on the Internet (Goldenberg, Libai, B., & Muller, 2001), becomes truly relevant. Consequently, companies aim to be recommended by Internet users. As Mark Zuckerberg, a creator of Facebook states: "nothing influences people more than a recommendation from a trusted friend. A trusted friend referral is the Holy Grail of advertising" (Maymann, 2008, p. 38).

**Table 5: Old Marketing versus New Marketing**

<b>Components</b>	<b>Old Marketing</b>	<b>New Marketing</b>
Marketing mindset	Use one-way, one-sided communication to tell brand story.	Nurture dialogue and relationships; be more transparent, earn trust, build credibility.
Brand equity	Brand recall is holy grail.	Brand value is determined by customers: How likely are customers to highly recommend the good or service?
Segmentation	Group customers by demographics.	Group customers by behaviour, attitudes, and interests—what's important to them.
Targeting	Target by demographics, especially for media buying.	Target according to customer behaviour.
Communication	Broadcast style: create and push message out for customers to absorb.	Digital environment for interactive communication through search and query, customer comments, personal reviews, or dialogue.
Content	Professional content created and controlled by marketers.	Mix of professional and user-generated content, increasingly visual.
Virality	A nice feature but popularity too often driven by flashy presentation rather than content.	Virality based on solid content about remarkable products or features that will get people talking and forwarding e-mail.
Reviews	Think Michelin Guide: the experts weigh in.	Think Amazon: users review and vote on everything.
Advertiser/Publisher Role	Publisher establishes channel and controls content to gather an audience for the advertisers who sponsor channels or programs.	Build relationships by sponsoring (not controlling) content and interaction when, where, and how customers want it.
Strategy	Top-down strategy imposed by senior management drives tactics.	Bottom-up strategy builds on winning ideas culled from constant testing and customer input.
Hierarchy	Information is organized into channels, folders, and categories to suit advertisers.	Information is available on demand by keyword, to suit users.
Payment	Cost per Thousand (CPM): Emphasis on cost; Advertisers buy with the idea that share of voice = Share of mind = Share of market.	Return on Investment (ROI): Invest in marketing for future growth and profitability based on measurable return

Source: (Weber, 2007)

- New technical and aesthetic features of the message become crucial, such as its interactivity and its ability to be shared electronically (Maymann, 2008).
- New terms and methods for measuring the effectiveness of a marketing strategy emerge. Concepts such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Social Media Optimization (SMO) have become common in marketing literature (Maymann, 2008; Scott, 2007). Thus, SEO refers to the importance of employing keywords, so that consumers can find information on a company when using search engines such as Google; whereas SMO indicates the relevance of optimising the interactivity between the different sources of social media (RSS feeds, social bookmarking, blogging, etc.) (Maymann, 2008). The goal of SMO is to increase the number of visitors to a website by enhancing its “linkability” and “bookmarking” possibilities (Maymann, 2008).
- New fears and threats appear for companies, which are concerned about several Internet-related problems, such as the information revealed on the Internet by employees, viruses and spy activities, legal issues, and bad comments on a blog (see *section 2.2.5*).

#### **2.2.3.3. Customer Relationship Management: the core of Social Media Marketing**

Overall, the approach defended by social media marketing authors is similar to the one taken in relationship marketing literature. Just as in relationship marketing, the customer (and not the product) becomes the centre of the strategy in social media marketing. Although in every market relation there is a product, the sale itself is only present at a certain point in the relationship process (Brogan & Smith, 2008; Weber, 2007). Thus, the relationship between a customer and a company may start with a visit to a corporate website or with reading some reviews and comments on a product (Scott, 2007).

From a relational approach, marketing is a social process that involves much more than the traditional 4P's of the marketing mix (Grönroos, 1994). Grönroos (1997), most representative author of relationship marketing, defines marketing as “the process of establishing, maintaining, enhancing, and when necessary terminating relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met, where this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises” (p. 407). Although Grönroos (2007) points out that the

traditional 4P's of the marketing mix are still useful, his definition shows that marketing is a broader concept.

According to Weber (2007), there are two ways for a company to build relationships with multiple publics, via social media:

- 1) Participate in the conversations that users are having.

Nowadays consumers have the opportunity to browse the Internet in order to find information on any given product and service. Current and potential customers have free access to online conversations about any particular company or brand. Authors agree on the fact that companies should participate in them (Gillin, 2008; Scott, 2007; Weber, 2007). Through these means companies will have the chance of establishing trusting and open relationships with their publics, and offer to them their “own version of the story”.

- 2) Provide compelling content and creating retail environments which customers want to visit.

In general, authors consider high-quality social media content to present the following characteristics:

- a) It is delivered to consumers when they need it, and it is not just broadcasted as traditional advertising (Scott, 2007).
- b) It balances professional and customer-generated content (Weber, 2007).
- c) It is honest and transparent (Weber, 2007).
- d) It is not just an “egocentric display of products and services” (p.35), but it focuses on the customers and their problems (Scott, 2007).
- e) It is ‘real’ and open to different points of view and ideas (Scott, 2007).
- f) It provides information and knowledge (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). For instance, Ikea’s website displays “Anna”, an automated online assistant designed to guide users throughout

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the company's website<sup>16</sup>. Customers visiting the website are able to find answers to some FAQs by chatting with "Anna".

Overall, authors point out that the social web provides numerous opportunities for strengthening and expanding relationships with customers and other stakeholders. These opportunities include, for example: (1) using the Web to reach a high number of people (Maymann, 2008); (2) stimulating collaboration with other organisations and the formation of partnerships (Weber, 2007); (3) obtaining direct feedback and benefit from the free exchange of ideas (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009); and (4) improving employee communications (Gillin, 2008).

#### **2.2.4. Common Social Media Marketing Strategies.**

This section reviews blogs, virtual communities, social network, micro-blogs, and viral messages as some of the most common social media strategies used by organisations (Carrabis *et al.*, 2008). Although the use of the aforementioned social media applications is not discussed in this thesis, the authors of this research will refer in numerous occasions to them in the rest of the chapters. Therefore, it is important to provide a general description of those communication tools and enlighten the reader on the corporate use of the different forms of social media.

##### **2.2.4.1. Blogging strategy**

In his article *Critical analysis of blogging in public relations* Kent (2008) defines blogging as a novelty which is influencing the public relations discipline. Blogs are commonly defined as Internet-based personal journals or diaries, very similar to simple websites. The word "blog" is an abbreviation of "Web log" (Trammel & Keshelashvili, 2005; Murray & Hourigan, 2008; Gordon, 2006; Newson, Houghton, & Patten, 2008; Retteberg, 2008; Demopoulos, 2006; Kent, 2008). According to Trammel & Keshelashvili (2005), and Retteberg (2008), the Internet and particularly blogging let ordinary people to avoid entrance barriers created by the press (such as financing the

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<sup>16</sup> Available on Ikea's website at URL: <http://www.ikea.com/>

publishing, or dealing with editors' corrections), issue their own content, and get in touch with readers worldwide.

Some common characteristics of blogs are: (1) the reverse chronological order of the posts (the latest post is always on the top); (2) the 'categories' or 'tags' created by the blogger in order to facilitate the organisation of the blog entries; (3) the content, which is fully controlled and managed by its author(s); (4) the possibility for readers of publishing commentaries; and (5) the personal manner in which they are normally written (Demopoulos, 2006; Kent, 2008; Trammel & Keshelashvili, 2005; Gordon, 2006; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Retteberg, 2008; Gillin, 2007).

The term *blogosphere* is used to refer to a whole network of blogs on the cyberspace (Maratea, 2008; Murray & Hourigan, 2008; Gillin, 2007); while a *blogger* is the person writing/owning a blog; and the terms *to blog* or *blogging* are usually used when talking about the process of writing and updating a blog (Nacht, 2006; Kent, 2008; Newson *et al.*, 2008). One of the main features of the blogosphere is that there is no one 'in charge' of it, yet it manages itself as a self-governing body (Gillin, 2007). Thus, bloggers are expected to follow a certain '*code of conduct*', whose norms advice to always use references, link to other websites, allow readers to publish comments, as well as be short and concrete. For instance, authors recommend bloggers to write blog posts which are no longer than 500 words, be transparent by making modifications visible, and never delete any posts (Gillin, 2007; Retteberg, 2008).

### **Corporate blogging**

Companies have realised about the potential that blogging can provide, such as the possibility of establishing conversations with their customers, and publishing their own content without the involvement of third parties (Weil, 2006; Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Retteberg, 2008; Gillin, 2007). Furthermore, it has become increasingly important to collect feedback from customers and network with them, as traditional corporate communication channels (such as mass media, press releases or 1.0 websites) are not efficient in doing so (Scoble & Israel, 2006; Newson *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, the expectations of stakeholders have also changed, and now they expect to be entertained, and need a substantial reason to read the corporate content in order to engage in conversation with a company (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Weil, 2006).

In spite of the great variety of corporate blogs<sup>17</sup> on the cyberspace, the main subject of all of them is the company and its products, and in this way they are used as marketing communication channels (Weil, 2006; Catalano, 2007; Gillin, 2007). A corporate blog can be a powerful tool, especially whether it is used to supplement other corporate communication channels (Demopoulos, 2006; Kent, 2008; Catalano, 2007; Brooks, 2006; Gillin, 2007). Blogging can help establish a passionate community around a company and its products, build long-term relationships with stakeholders, strengthen a brand, and demonstrate a company's expertise within a field (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Weil, 2006; Brooks, 2006; Retteberg, 2008; Gillin, 2007). Additionally, Kent (2008) claims that blogging can help a company persuade or deliver clear messages to a company's stakeholders.

From a marketing perspective, other benefits of corporate blogging include: feedback on products and services; enhancement of customer relations; source for new ideas and research; speed and flexibility in the communication of corporate messages; humanisation of the company; the possibility of reaching the target audiences at low cost; as well as a medium for employer branding and crisis communication (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Weil, 2006; Kent, 2008; Catalano, 2007; Gordon, 2006; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Retteberg, 2008). Newson *et al.* (2008) even argue that in few years time "blogging will be as normal for businesses as having a website is today. The culture will have changed: blogging will on balance be less geeky, less chummy, more commercialized" (p. 13).

Nevertheless, the big question for companies is whether they should consider blogging at all. According to Newson *et al.* (2008), the decision highly depends on how often a company's stakeholders surf the Internet in order to find information about its products and services. If they do it on a regular basis, blogging can be a great marketing tool for a company and help achieve recognition in a cost-efficient way. On the other hand, Newson *et al.* (2008) point out that big corporations, which participate in online conversations because of their size and influence<sup>18</sup>, should consider the goals of their presence online more carefully. The best strategy for establishing a corporate blog (does not matter if a company is small or big) is to have a communication goal which must be communicated to its readers (Weil, 2006; Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Gordon, 2006; Brooks, 2006; Retteberg, 2008; Gillin, 2007). Furthermore, a company should establish some guidelines for employees who are blogging about the organisation (Catalano, 2007; Retteberg,

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<sup>17</sup> As suggested by Holtz & Demopoulos (2006), the corporate blogs can be categorized into the following: executive blogs, company blogs, product blogs, customer service blogs, advocacy blogs, and employee blogs.

<sup>18</sup> Here influence refers to the fact that the companies are constantly mentioned in the press and have high brand recognition between consumers, etc.)

2008). Kent (2008) states that an organisation has to fully understand how the blogosphere work in order to reach its full potential and not make reckless decisions. Corporate blogs should follow all the rules of the blogosphere, be updated quite often, not be used as a tool to push the marketing messages or hard-core product advertising, but remain professional (Brooks, 2006; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2007).

Compared to traditional communication tools, blog formats allows more flexibility and, therefore, should be written in a fun and personal manner, be interesting to read, and stay open to criticism (Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Catalano, 2007; Brooks, 2006; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Retteberg, 2008; Gillin, 2007). Dell<sup>19</sup>, BBC<sup>20</sup>, Sun Microsystems<sup>21</sup>, General Motors<sup>22</sup>, Cisco<sup>23</sup>, or Benetton<sup>24</sup> are examples of some popular corporate blogs (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009).

#### **2.2.4.2. Virtual community strategy**

Individuals communicating on the Internet may constitute what has been named ‘virtual’ or ‘online’ communities. According to Rheingold (1993), a virtual community is “a social aggregation of people carrying out public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in the cyberspace” (p. 398). Although their members may be geographically dispersed, virtual communities are similar to traditional communities even if the relationships between them may develop without any physical encounter over time (Shang *et al.*, 2006).

Consumers participate in virtual communities in order to satisfy a number of social and psychological needs (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). According to Sicilia & Palazón (2008), those needs are addressed by a number of key values which online communities encompass: (1) functional value (e.g. advice, information, and expertise), (2) social value (e.g. friendship, emotional support, self-esteem, social status, social enhancement), and (3) entertainment value.

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<sup>19</sup> Dell’s blog available on URL: <http://www.direct2dell.com>

<sup>20</sup> BBC’s blog available on URL: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs>

<sup>21</sup> Sun Microsystems’ blog available on URL: <http://blogs.sun.com>

<sup>22</sup> General Motors’ blog available on URL: <http://fastlane.gmblogs.com>

<sup>23</sup> Cisco’s blog available on URL: <http://www.ciscoblog.com/>

<sup>24</sup> Benetton’s blog available on URL: <http://www.benettontalk.com>



Many virtual communities are formed around consumption activities (Kozinets, 1999). Virtual communities which are constituted around a brand are called virtual or online ‘brand communities’ (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008). Some online brand communities such as Harley-Davidson or Macintosh computers have been developed by consumers (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002), while others have been built by companies themselves. Developing and supporting virtual brand communities companies attempt to reinforce their brand image and corporate identity (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002). Some famous examples of virtual brand communities are the ones created by Manchester United Football Club<sup>25</sup> or Lego<sup>26</sup> (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002). Weber (2007) proposes seven steps to building a successful customer environment on the Internet:

- 1) Observe and create a customer map.
- 2) Recruit community members.
- 3) Evaluate online conduit strategies.
- 4) Engage communities in conversation.
- 5) Measure the company’s involvement.
- 6) Promote your community.
- 7) Improve the community.

“Idea sharing sites” are a good example of how companies are using the power of online communities to engage consumers and reinforce their brands (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). On websites such as MyStarbucks Idea<sup>27</sup> or Dell’s IdeaStorm<sup>28</sup>, users can present their ideas on how to improve the companies’ products and services. The community will then discuss and vote on the different ideas. The most popular suggestions are later studied and implemented by the company’s management. In general, idea sharing sites are economic, effective and direct ways of using virtual communities to obtain feedback from consumers, but also to engage and involve them into the product development process (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009).

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<sup>25</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.manutd.com/>

<sup>26</sup> Available on URL <http://www.lego.com/>

<sup>27</sup> Available on URL: <http://mystarbucksidea.force.com/home/home.jsp>

<sup>28</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.ideastorm.com/>

#### **2.2.4.3. Social networking strategy**

Social networking websites are also known as consumer-driven sites or media. According to Newson *et al.* (2008), social networking sites are one of the key drivers of Web 2.0, since such websites provide consumers with a high level of control over the content. Social networking websites can be defined as social media platforms which enable individuals to connect to and network with each other (Newson *et al.*, 2008). Authors point out that individuals are using social networking websites simply because they like “to connect to other people” (Kennedy, 2009, p. 20), and because “they appeal to our instinct for collecting” (Retteberg, 2008, p. 73).

In this section Facebook and MySpace, two of the most popular social networking websites and platforms, are explored. However, there are many other popular consumer-driven media, such as professional social networking website LinkedIn and consumer-content distribution websites, such as YouTube<sup>29</sup> or Flickr,<sup>30</sup> that have also substantial amount of influence online.

#### **Facebook and MySpace Marketing**

MySpace and Facebook are amongst the most popular social networking sites (Weber, 2007). According to Gillin (2008), these websites can offer a company the possibility of reaching millions of users. While Facebook has become a strong marketing tool due to its high number of adults and white collar users (Gillin, 2008), MySpace is extremely popular amongst teenagers. It is even claimed that MySpace has become a “mainstream lifestyle” in the US (Percival, 2008; Holzner, 2009; Newson, *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2007; 2008). Retteberg (2008) points out that there is a great social pressure on individuals, especially young ones, from their peers to join social networking websites such as Facebook and MySpace, as a significant part of their social life is actually “happening” online.

Facebook and MySpace, as any other social networking websites, offer a space where users can create their personal profile, share information about themselves, and connect with other people (friends, acquaintances, work colleagues, and people with similar interests) (Percival, 2008; Holzner, 2009; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Retteberg, 2008; Gillin, 2007; 2008). Facebook also provides its users with access to third parties’ applications (such as games, quizzes, virtual gifts, etc.), and

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<sup>29</sup> YouTube is a video sharing website, where users can upload and share videos. Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com>.

<sup>30</sup> Flickr is an image and video hosting website and online community platform, enabling its users to share pictures or videos. Available on URL: <http://www.flickr.com>.

the possibility of updating their statuses<sup>31</sup>. The possibilities of networking and entertainment simultaneously are probably some of the reasons why Facebook's popularity grew so fast (Newson *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2008). Third parties' applications ("widgets") are also available on MySpace, yet they are not that well developed (Percival, 2008). Retteberg (2008) points out that there are some substantial similarities between blogging and social networking platforms such as Facebook and MySpace, since a Facebook or MySpace user's profile is actually "an automatically generated blog, where ... story is reported or narrated by Facebook itself" (p.70).

Regarding the corporate use of Facebook and MySpace, these platforms help to build relationships with consumers and create online communities, which are usually really costly to build anywhere else on the Internet (Percival, 2008; Holzner, 2009; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2008). Additionally, the websites are really efficient in providing feedback from customers, as well as access to their personal information displayed on the site (Percival, 2008; Gillin, 2008). Burger King<sup>32</sup> and Toyota<sup>33</sup> are examples of companies which have used MySpace for connecting with their target audiences (Percival, 2008).

According to Gillin (2008) the main difference between Facebook and MySpace is their purpose. While Facebook is more appropriate to establish relationships and engage in conversation with the stakeholders interested in a company or its products, MySpace can be used more as a medium for branding and for entertaining the teen audience (Gillin, 2008). Holzner (2009) argues that, in general, users spend more time on Facebook than on MySpace.

On Facebook and MySpace, companies can establish their own groups or pages and invite users to join them (Percival, 2008; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2008). However, a corporation entering a social networking website has to offer some value to its users before "inviting" them to join its network (Gillin, 2008; Weber, 2007). Creating a page or a group is not enough, thus companies should keep users updated and share some interesting information and videos, organise contests, etc. (Klaassen, 2009; Weber, 2007). As in any other social media, corporations should respect the rules of the medium, and always be transparent by disclosing who they are and the purpose of joining the site (Klaassen, 2009; Weber, 2007; Gillin, 2008; 2007). Companies should avoid using

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<sup>31</sup> A Facebook status is information on what a user is doing or thinking at the moment. A Facebook status is written by a Facebook user on his profile page and is automatically shared with all his contacts on the platform.

<sup>32</sup> Burger King's MySpace page is available on URL: <http://www.myspace.com/burgerking>

<sup>33</sup> Toyota's MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/toyotamusic>

social networking websites simply as corporate websites. In order to be noticed, they should try to be more interactive and fun, and keep in mind that they are participating in platforms “where visitors are part of the dialogue, not simply passive observers” (Weber, 2007, p. 203).

#### **2.2.4.4. Twitter Marketing**

Created in 2006, Twitter is a new tool that companies can use simultaneously with their traditional communication channels (Kho, 2009; Karpinski, 2009; Gillin, 2008). The application, which started as a very personal tool, is nowadays highly used by corporations (Kho, 2009; Karpinski, 2009; Carter, 2009).

In short, Twitter can be defined as micro-blogging service provider. Individuals using it need to answer the question ‘*what are you doing?*’<sup>34</sup> in no more than 140 symbols (Kho, 2009; Karpinski, 2009; Alsever, 2009; Nutley, 2009; Micek & Whitlock, 2008; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2008). Usually Twitter users share their thoughts, ideas or experiences with their friends, although it is also possible to provide links to articles in newspapers, blogs, corporate statements, pictures, videos, and podcasts (Mortgage Strategy, 2009; Karpinski, 2009). Micek & Whitlock (2008) claim that Twitter allows companies to contact their different audiences “in a non-obtrusive way” (p.42).

A *Tweet* is a status update on a Twitter account; while *followers* are the network of people who track the updates on the account; and *Tweeters* or *Tweeterers* are the people using Twitter (Kho, 2009; Alsever, 2009; Newson *et al.*, 2008). The key characteristics of Twitter is that every user accounts are public and that everyone can ‘forward’ (*retweet*) someone else’s update to their personal account, so that their own network of followers can read it (Kho, 2009; Newson *et al.*, 2008; Gillin, 2008). Furthermore, users can send direct messages to their followers and link their Twitter account to their Facebook profile (Kennedy, 2009; Kho, 2009).

Twitter is a cheap communication channel for companies that (1) allows to reach current and potential consumers; (2) contributes to managing customer relations by establishing conversations with them; (3) helps increase brand recognition, and contributes to crisis and reputation management; (4) establishes dialogues with influencers; (5) keeps companies updated about the latest trends in the market; and (6) helps to track competitors online (Kho, 2009; Mortgage Strategy,

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<sup>34</sup> Kho (2009) suggests the more exact question would be “What would you like to share today?” (p.14).

2009; Karpinski, 2009; Carter, 2009; Micek & Whitlock, 2008). Furthermore, as Gillin (2008) points out, Twitter offers speed and flexibility, some assets which are highly valued in today's turbulent environment.

Newson *et al.* (2008) suggest that Twitter could be mostly useful for companies that do their business online or have a strong online presence. Companies thinking about creating a corporate account on Twitter should consider the following suggestions:

- It is important to set a clear communicational goal and be transparent about it to their followers (Karpinski, 2009).
- The best way to spread the news about a firm is to be *retweeted*. In order to do so, it is important to suggest some interesting piece of news, and to write updates which have no more than 120 characters (Kho, 2009).
- As with any other kind of social media application, businesses should avoid promoting their products, remain proactive, and react to what followers *tweet* (Karpinski, 2009; Alsever, 2009; Nutley, 2009; Micek & Whitlock, 2008).
- Micek & Whitlock (2008) also suggest that companies should be creative while using Twitter, be “the trend setter” (p.28), and “make an impact with every tweet” (p.43).
- Employees should be the ones responsible for managing the corporate Twitter accounts of a company, since this helps to humanise the corporation (Karpinski, 2009).
- Different accounts can be created for different purposes, such as corporate press releases, available job offerings, as well as promotion of events and new products. (Karpinski, 2009).

The New York Times is an example of one of the multiple companies currently using Twitter (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). The New York Times on Twitter<sup>35</sup>, written by Jacob Harris, had 1,847, 829 followers in September 2009.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://twitter.com/NyTimes>

#### **2.2.4.5. Viral marketing strategy**

According to Wilson (2000) viral marketing is “any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence” (p. 1). Viral marketing attempts to use word-of-mouth generated on the Internet in order to achieve its objectives. The term ‘viral’ refers to the way those marketing messages are spread from one person to another, similar to biological or computer viruses (Cruz & Fill, 2008), by using online communication tools such as email or social network utilities.

Viral marketing messages can take the form of video clips, images, texts, mobile text messages, and podcasts. When a company or advertising agency develops a viral marketing message in order to reach a specific target, content and distribution are the key factors for success (Maymann, 2008). Viral marketing success comes from self-publishing online content that people want to share (Weber, 2007). According to Maymann (2008), a high-quality viral message characterises by the following eight criteria:

- *An outstanding story*: Viral messages are fun, provocative, irreverent, or subversive.
- *Stickiness*: Viral messages are fresh and original.
- *Relevance*: Viral messages do not seem to have a marketing purpose. Thus, the association with a product or with a company is very subtle.
- *Portability*: Viral messages are in a format easy to share using computer and mobile technologies.
- *Shareability*: Viral messages display a good story which encourages users to share it with others.
- *Timing/actuality*: Viral messages have not been broadcast through other media channels before.
- *Content hook*: Viral messages catch the attention of the user easily.
- *Depth*: Viral messages are able to change from being a single unit of information to a unit of potential experiences. For example, Cadbury created a viral video which showed a gorilla playing the drums to a popular Phil Collin’s song (Maymann, 2008). As soon as the video was posted on YouTube, users started to play with its content. Thus many users uploaded their own version of the video that showed the gorilla playing their own favourite hits.

#### **2.2.4.6. Search engines, RSS, wikis, and podcasts**

Other relevant tools that are usually used by companies in their marketing communications strategies on the Internet are reputation aggregators, RSS, wikis, and podcasts.

- Search engines are sites that act as a gateway for users to reach online content. Google, Yahoo, and MSN are some of the most popular ones. Search engines are also called reputation aggregators by some authors, since they provide rankings of the content on other websites (Weber, 2007). Companies need to consider the way search engines work in order to generate visitors for their websites. Keywords, content, structure, and links to other sites are some of the factors that must be taken into account (Weber, 2007).
- A wiki is an online social encyclopaedia whose content is created cooperatively, since it enables visitors to add or edit the information on it (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). A wiki may gather information on general knowledge such as Wikipedia<sup>36</sup> or on a particular topic, such as Lostpedia<sup>37</sup> which is the online encyclopaedia on *Lost*, an American television show produced by ABC (Maymann, 2008).
- RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a mechanism commonly used by blogs and news sites in order to inform their readers about new updates (Weber, 2007). Users can subscribe to a website's RSS feeds to receive an alert every time a new post has been published (Weber, 2007). Companies use RSS for multiple purposes such as informing their customers about the launch of new products and special offers, or spreading press releases. The Guardian, Financial Times, The Independent, and The Times are a few examples of newspapers offering RSS subscriptions to their online readers. In the same way, the majority of corporate blogs allow their readers to receive the latest updates via RSS feeds. Dell's blog *Direct2Dell*<sup>38</sup>, The clothing company Topshop's *Inside Out*<sup>39</sup>, or Google's blog<sup>40</sup> are examples of corporate blogs using RSS to alert their readers about new updates.
- A podcast is an audio file distributed via the Internet by companies or individuals (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). Podcasts distinguish themselves from other digital audio files because they can be downloaded and then listened on a computer or a mobile device such as mobile

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<sup>36</sup>Available on URL: <http://wikipedia.org/>

<sup>37</sup>Available on URL: [http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page)

<sup>38</sup>Dell's blog available on URL: <http://www.direct2dell.com/>

<sup>39</sup>Topshop's blog, *Inside Out* available on URL: <http://insideout.topshop.com/>

<sup>40</sup>Google's blog available on URL: <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>

phones or music players (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). Users commonly subscribe to podcasts by using RSS feeds. Sun Microsystems or IBM are examples of corporations which use podcasts actively in order to engage consumers. On their podcasts, the organisations make public their latest innovations, elaborate on some of their most frequently asked questions, and include talks with highly-valued technology experts.

#### ***2.2.5. Risks and fears of using social media marketing***

Companies are concerned about the risks and threats involved in social media. Apart from some ‘technical’ issues such as viruses and spy activities (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009), reputation damage and the release of confidential information are the most common fears that stop corporations from submerging themselves in social media (Scott, 2007; Weber, 2007). This section reviews these common issues, and the responses to them that can be found in social media literature.

##### **a) Viruses and spy activity.**

It is advisable to be aware of the risks that using social media may carry out for an organisation. In spite of the multiple benefits of joining Web 2.0 applications, companies communicating on the Internet need to protect themselves against virus attacks and possible spy activities. Therefore, as any other Internet users, companies should not forget the importance of keeping themselves informed about the latest anti-virus innovations, using an effective anti-virus programme, and even considering the possibility of contracting the services of a specialist company (Ministry of Small Businesses and Consumer Services of Ontario, 2008).

##### **b) Reputation damage.**

Although more and more companies are using social media in order to communicate with their stakeholders, some organisations are still afraid of receiving negative feedback and being publicly criticized on their own websites (Gillin, 2007; Wright, 2005; Weil, 2006). As it was previously highlighted, social media authors advise companies to be open to criticism and engage in a conversation with their detractors (Wright, 2005) (see *section 2.3.3.3.* and *section 2.2.4.1*). Thus, companies should participate in the conversations about them which take place on the Internet since, due to the intrinsic characteristics of social media, criticism and bad comments will happen



anyway (Gillin, 2008; Scott, 2007; Weber, 2007). In fact, Wright (2005) argues that a company is more likely to be trusted by the online community whether it is not scared of openness:

*“As your secretiveness decreases, the community’s trust in your company increases. This is a foundational part of employing and encouraging blacksmith bloggers. While you obviously don’t want them to give away anything truly secret (like upcoming product designs or financial issues), blacksmiths can do common sense things to increase your customers’ trust in you, to build relationships, and to help customers”* (Wright, 2005, p. 103).

c) Release of confidential information.

Organisations occasionally fear the risks of operating in such a broad context as the cyberspace. The release of vital information can be originated, not only from spy or viruses activities, but also within the organisation itself. In particular, companies are usually cautious that information could be revealed by their employees if they allowed them to blog. Regarding this particular objection, Scott (2007) recommends not having specific rules for the use of social media:

*“I’d suggest implementing corporate policies that say that employees can’t sexually harass anyone, that they can’t reveal secrets, they can’t use inside information to trade stock or influence prices, and they shouldn’t talk ill of the competition in any way or via any media. The guidelines should include e-mail, writing a blog, commenting on blogs (and online forums and chat rooms), and other forms of communication. Rather than focus on putting guidelines on blogs (the technology), it is better to focus on guiding the way people behave”* (Scott, 2007, p. 57).

d) Intrusion of consumers’ privacy.

As Sankar & Bouchard (2009) point out, “questions like ‘who has what rights to the data?’ and ‘what happens to the data if a user closes an account?’ are important” (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009, p.120). There is a thin line between what makes an experience personal and relevant, and what makes people feel like their privacy has been invaded. Therefore, social media authors emphasise the importance of respecting consumers’ privacy and the need for being very careful with the online content that is produced by users.

There has been much debate about this issue online. For instance, in February 2009 Facebook updated its privacy policies, eliminating users’ rights over the content they had published online

after closing their accounts<sup>41</sup> (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). Facebook had to face an “avalanche of protest” after famous blogger Chris Walters published a post titled “Facebook's New Terms Of Service: 'We Can Do Anything We Want With Your Content. Forever’”<sup>42</sup> (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009). The criticism made the company retract its changes, and establish a public privacy policy which could be reviewed and voted by its users (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009).

### **2.3. Social media marketing and postmodernity**

Overall, marketing academicians have established the influence of social media in three postmodern aspects: a) isolation and individualism, b) hyperreality, and c) chaos and confusion.

#### **a) Isolation and individualism vs. communal consumption**

As previously mentioned, postmodern consumers seek both individualistic and communal brand experiences (Cova, 1996; Simmons, 2008). On the one hand, postmodern individuals want to feel special and achieve this uniqueness through the consumption of products and services that help them to define their identities. On the other hand, postmodern consumers dislike doing this in absolute solitude, and they aim to be part of a community whose members share the same specific interests (Simmons, 2008). Therefore, neo-tribalism emerges (Cova, 1997), and the consumption of products and services becomes “the social glue” between postmodern individuals (Simmons, 2008, p. 305). Consumption acquires a “communal dimension”, in which “the goods and services which are valued are mainly those which, through their linking value, permit and support social interaction of the communal type” (Cova, 1997, p. 307).

Sitting in front of their computers, individuals can now buy almost anything via the Internet, get informed, work and keep in touch with others (Cova, 1997). Due to the development of telecommunications and the surge of the Internet these activities can be carried out at home, without having the need to go out and establish any physical contact with others. Consequently, isolation and individualism increases, while online communities flourish (see *section 2.2.4.2*).

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<sup>41</sup> 4th February 2009, the clause deleted in their Terms and Conditions was called “Expire on Termination” (Sankar & Bouchard, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Available on URL: <http://consumerist.com/5150175/facebooks-new-terms-of-service-we-can-do-anything-we-want-with-your-content-forever>

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**b) Hyperreality**

The virtual world of cyberspace is itself an expression of hyperrealism (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). In the postmodern era, the Internet becomes an environment where individuals build simulations of the real world or completely imaginary ones. Thus, the online world offers to postmodern individuals:

- a) A complete virtual reality which keeps growing every day, and where they can find satisfaction to their information, communication, friendships, emotional support, advice, and entertainment needs (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008).
- b) Personalised “brand interactions with their own individualised selves” (Simmons, 2008, p. 302). According to Simmons (2008), postmodern consumers may prefer this type of contact with brands, since they find traditional interactions between brands and consumers hypocritical and false (Simmons, 2008). Consequently, consumers consider social media to be a more trustful source of information than other channels of communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).
- c) The experience of a diversity of many themes, not becoming fixed in any single one (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002).

**c) Chaos and confusion**

In postmodernity, marketers are confused. Not only because in the era of social media they are losing control over the information on products and services (Proctor & Kitchen, 2002; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), but also because it is becoming more and more difficult to segment consumers and predict their purchasing behaviour (Cova, 1997) :

*“...the consumer appears giddy, he or she does as he or she pleases, upsetting all the modern reference system which had organized individuals according to categories. Furthermore, he or she appears fickle and unreliable, buys black in the morning and white in the afternoon, making it impossible to pin down their behaviour. Finally, they buy less, or at least, spend less (as sales have not gone down in volume), causing confusion in a socio-economic system founded on a market economy whose motor is the increase of consumption” (Cova, 1997, p. 303).*

Markets are becoming too fragmented and therefore, traditional marketing segmentation techniques are no longer effective. Consequently, new marketing approaches have emerged, such as relationship marketing, micromarketing, database marketing, and one-to-one marketing (Cova,

1997). It appears that there is a need for a customer database whose information is generated by continuous interactions with the customers (Grönroos, 1996).

Simmons (2008) points out the potential of the Internet as a marketing tool that can address the complexity of postmodern consumer markets, allowing organisations to tailor their messages to the interests of every consumer. Individualised messages can be created due to the development of web analytics (Simmons, 2008). As it was mentioned before, Amazon costumers receive products recommendations depending on the pattern of their previous searches and purchases. Similarly, Last.fm users are suggested to look at or buy certain albums based on the type of music they normally listen to.

Overall, social media is proposed as a possible tool for solving some of the challenges which postmodern consumers are presenting to marketers, such as the need for personalised experiences, communal consumption, and changeable demands (Simmons, 2008); a source of information different to traditional media (radio, television, magazines, and newspapers) (Mangold & Faulds, 2009); and a pool for offline social relations with like-minded people, opposed to traditional physical interactions (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Cova, 1997).

### 3. CASE ANALYSIS

#### 3.1. Case #1: Nike+

Nike, Inc. – sportswear and equipment supplier based in the United States - gives a good example of how a company can go beyond *just* selling shoes and create some value-added service by using social media. Nike Corporation has been always famous for their hard-core product marketing: “The athletic shoemaker’s famous swoosh emblem and a string of ad campaigns, starting with its iconic “Just Do It” series, set the gold standard for getting a clear message to mass audience” (Holmes, 2006). However, the company started giving a new direction to their marketing and communication strategy few years ago, when they decided to try the medium of social media. The present section of the study reviews Nike+, a successful social media strategy carried out by Nike, Inc. Through Nike+, the company offers its consumers collaboration, communication and the possibility of becoming a member of biggest runners' community around the world (McClusky, 2009).

##### *3.1.1. Nike’s social media activity previous to Nike+*

Nike, Inc. has been very active when it comes to social media, and the company has presence on the biggest and most popular social media platforms. Before their online project Nike+ was launched in 2006, Nike has already experienced certain success using social media tools for marketing purposes. Among the main online initiatives undertaken were the blogging initiative *Art for speed*; a viral marketing campaign on YouTube; and *Joga.com*, an online community for soccer fans.

**Art of Speed blog**

The blog *Art of Speed*<sup>43</sup> was one of the first online actions, released when Nike started experimenting with social media in 2004. Park (2004) quotes Remy Stern, editor of the *Art of Speed* blog, who claims that “This is really one of the first times that a leading brand has used the medium to reach an audience“. The online media company Gawker Media<sup>44</sup> was assigned the task of coordinating and writing the blog during May 2004 (Ives, 2004; Notaro, 2008). Additionally, Gawker Media also hosted the blog *Art of Speed* on its server.

The communicational goals of the blog were: (1) to publish 15 video-clips which several artists created for Nike about the idea of velocity (Ives, 2004; Notaro, 2008), and (2) to stress Nike’s attention for being the best in their field by linking the brand to the concept of *speed* (Notaro, 2008) – “Speed has been a part of our dna” (onedotzero8, 2004). *Art of Speed* blog was a one-month project, which included blog postings related to short movies, the artists who directed them, and information about contemporary cinema in general (Gawker Media, 2004; Notaro, 2008; Ives, 2004; onedotzero8, 2004).

The company did not hope to get a monetary profit out of the blog *Art of Speed*. Instead, the aim was to create good positive word-of-mouth, generate some buzz, and engage people – quality audience vs. quantity audience (Notaro, 2008; Park, 2004)-, into a communication process together with Nike (Ives, 2004; Notaro, 2008; Oser, 2004). According to Notaro (2008), the *Art of Speed* blog was not advertised, and it was linked to Nike’s corporate website<sup>45</sup> only by a banner on the site. At the time the blog was released, the blogosphere was acknowledged by only 10 percent of the Internet users, but it was a right tool to reach opinion leaders whose age varied from 18-34 (Park, 2004). Nonetheless, as Notaro (2008) points out, the blog generated a positive response from the audience, even though back in 2004 Internet users were still very cautious and sceptical to all online corporate content:

*The site was so ‘cool’ that, as ..., it was visited every day by “several hundreds of bored Adidas employees”. The mix of young talent, digital film-making and blogging was irresistible even for the competition! ... The Art of Speed ad campaign was the*

<sup>43</sup>The blog’s URL address was: <http://www.gawker.com/artofspeed>. The website is no longer available. Some content from the blog is still accessible on <http://www.onedotzero.com/artofspeed/#> (October, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Gawker Media is online media company that owns over 10 blogs. It was a first Gawker Media’s blog for a corporate client (Ives, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> Nike corporate website: <http://www.nike.com/>

*culmination of Nike's long-standing efforts to 'in-corporate' the concept of speed within its own 'corporate image' (Notaro, 2008, pp. 70, 76).*

The success of *Art of Speed* depended not only on Nike's marketing efforts, but partly more on the fact that the blog was built like a microsite<sup>46</sup> within the blog Gawker.com which, according to Oser (2004), for some people had more authority and credibility than Nike itself.

### **First viral campaign on YouTube**

In 2005 Nike became one of the first brands to realise about the potential of YouTube<sup>47</sup> as an effective medium to spread viral marketing content (Wasserman, 2006). Thus, by the end of 2005 the company uploaded a video<sup>48</sup> showing the star football player Ronaldinho trying on a pair of Nike's shoes (Wasserman, 2006; Maymann, 2008), and then hitting "the cross bar of a football goal three times in a row" (Maymann, 2008, p. 25).



**Image 1: Football player Ronaldinho in two captures of the viral marketing video released by Nike in 2005.**

According to Maymann (2008), the video became one of the most successful clips in the history of YouTube, and it was seen more than 22.5 million times. The video spread virally and became very popular on YouTube, since it was original, entertaining and engaging (Wasserman, 2006;

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<sup>46</sup> According to Gawker Media "micro-site" is a "borrowed a term from the magazine world: the microsite is labelled special advertising section" (Gawker Media, 2004) and it is used when it is necessary to distinguish it from the editorial content (Gawker Media, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> YouTube beta version was launched in 2005 (Wasserman, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Video available on Youtube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i\\_JS1YG8H2c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_JS1YG8H2c)

Maymann, 2008). Nike, Inc. reported that the video was very successful: “For a modest amount, we make digital content readily accessible to the world, giving consumers the choice to view it, on demand. In the case of the Ronaldinho video, we’ve had an incredible consumer response from every corner of the world”, said Trevor Edwards, EVP-global brand and category management at Nike (Wasserman, 2006).

### **Joga.com**

In February 2006, Nike started a partnership with Google in order to launch their first social networking website for soccer fans, called *Joga.com*,<sup>49</sup> during the FIFA World Cup<sup>50</sup> (Holmes, 2006). Nike was creating the content for the project, whereas Google<sup>51</sup> was responsible for the website’s technical solutions (H.R., 2006). The social networking site *Joga.com* was a part of marketing campaign *Joga Bonito* (which means “play beautifully” in Portuguese) (Holmes, 2006; H.R., 2006; Ramaswamy, 2008; Klaassen, 2006). The campaign *Joga Bonito* consisted of several commercials featuring French soccer star Eric Cantona<sup>52</sup> (Croft, 2006). Nike created their own online video channel for the campaign, called *JogaTV*, which displayed videos featuring Nike’s endorsed football stars on YouTube (Holmes, 2006). According to Holmes (2006), the website *Joga.com* was the creative and innovative outcome, which emerged from the broadcasting situation in the US, where Adidas had bought all the rights to advertise during the FIFA tournament. It was a new kind and different marketing initiative coming from a “traditionally product-centric organization” (Ramaswamy, 2008), which usually had focused on mass advertising campaigns (Holmes, 2006; Ramaswamy, 2008). However, Holmes (2006) suggests that it was a natural development of Nike’s marketing communications, since the company was keeping the track of the online conversations about its brand.

*Joga.com* became an online community for soccer lovers (speaking 14 different languages), where fans could socialise and network with each other, discuss matches and football lifestyle, blog about their favourite teams, create fan groups for players, download exclusive videos from Nike, and share their own videos and pictures demonstrating their soccer skills (Holmes, 2006; H.R., 2006;

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<sup>49</sup> The website was no longer available in November, 2009.

<sup>50</sup> World Cup was held in Germany from June 9 until July 9, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> According to Croft (2006) it was “the first time Google has created and maintained a site for a third party in this way” (p.19).

<sup>52</sup> Cantona (along with other famous soccer stars) was appearing in number advertisements filmed for Nike and broadcasted on TV, encouraging soccer players to play beautiful football (Croft, 2006)



Ramaswamy, 2008; Klaassen, 2006; Croft, 2006). As on any other social networking website, *Joga.com* users could create their own individual profiles and befriend with others (Ramaswamy, 2008; H.R., 2006; Klaassen, 2006).

By the end of the World Cup, the community had more than 1 million of registered members, and many more visitors had watched the videos. For instance, one of the most successful videos featuring soccer star Ronaldinho<sup>53</sup> had been viewed 7.5 million times in 2006 (Holmes, 2006). *Joga.com* became so successful and grew into a passionate online community because Nike was able to persuade soccer fans that the website was really devoted to soccer, and was not just a marketing stunt for a company (H.R., 2006). *Joga.com* initiative helped the company to understand their target audience's needs and preferences better, get an idea of what they want – and do not want – to be engaged with, helped to create a passionate football fans' community centred around Nike's brand and, most importantly, provided value to football fans (Holmes, 2006; Ramaswamy, 2008). As Ramaswamy (2008) points out, *Joga.com* helped Nike to reach a community of millions of passionate soccer fans through value creation and experience.



**Image 2: Football player Ronaldinho (Left) and players from the Brazilian national football team (Right) in two captions of the videos released for the *Joga Bonito* campaign.**

Social media was not the only platform that was used to popularize *Joga Bonito* initiative. According to Ramaswamy (2008) the *Joga.com* social network was also a part of a bigger marketing campaign:

*Nike sponsored street soccer competitions, created a web site that connected professional players with their fans, ... sponsored conventional Internet marketing*

<sup>53</sup> Available on *Nikesoccer* Channel on YouTube, URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTY4Yo2SR2o>

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*programs. ... on the “Nike ID” web site, the firm invited twenty purveyors of sneaker culture to compete in designing a new shoe for Nike (p. 9).*

### **3.1.2. Nike+ - the biggest runners’ community online**

*“Nike + iPod is a partnership between two iconic, global brands with a shared passion for creating meaningful consumer product experiences through design and innovation,”* Mark Parker, Nike CEO (Nike, Inc., 2006)

In 2006 Nike launched Nike+, a new social media initiative that it would eventually become its most successful one. Through Nike+, the company created the biggest runners’ community online: “the legion of people, from Olympic-level athletes to ordinary folks just hoping to lower their blood pressure, who are plugging into a data-driven revolution” (McClusky, 2009). Through a very successful marketing communication programme and a product development strategy, Nike build up a loyal brand’s advocacy group, creating an experience for its customers that goes beyond the purchasing action (McClusky, 2009; Morrissey, 2009; Gregory, 2007; Olander, 2008). Additionally, the project Nike+ was created in partnership with Apple Inc.<sup>54</sup>, turning out to be a model of an outstanding collaboration between “the world’s top sporting-goods brand with the world’s most beloved gadget<sup>55</sup>” (Gregory, 2007).

#### **What is Nike+?**

Nike+ can be defined in two ways: 1) as *a system*, which helps runners to track their workouts, and 2) as *an experience* that gives runners the possibility to achieve the maximum results from their trainings, and share the collected information online with others (Olander, 2008).

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<sup>54</sup> “Apple Inc. is an American multinational corporation that designs and manufactures consumer electronics and computer software products. The company’s best-known hardware products include Macintosh computers, the iPod and the iPhone” (<http://www.apple.com>).

<sup>55</sup> Apple’s iPod

Thus, in order to understand the success of Nike+, its technical features must be taken into account. Stefan Olander<sup>56</sup>, Global Director of Brand Connections at Nike, describes Nike+ as follows:

*It's a system ... that actually helps you track how you are doing when you are out for a run. ... a little sensor in your left shoe pings out a signal with every strike you take. So you get to know all the time how fast you're going, how forth you've gone, how many calories you've burned. (Olander, 2008, p. ¶2).*

Nike+ sensor can send out the information into two devices that runners can check while they are exercising: iPod<sup>57</sup> or Nike+ SportBand (Olander, 2008).



**Image 3: Pictures of Nike+ iPod kit and Nike+ Sport Band (source: [www.nikebiz.com](http://www.nikebiz.com))**

Nike and Apple launched the Nike+ iPod kit in July 2006 (Gregory, 2007; Nike, Inc., 2006). The kit, which can be purchased for \$29, includes (1) a sensor that a runner can put under the sole of their Nike+ running shoe pair (which costs around \$100)<sup>58</sup>, and (2) a receiver, that has to be connected to an iPod. The device will assemble different data about the work out, such as the speed, the distance, and the calories burned by the runner (Gregory, 2007; Vella, 2007; Matthews, 2007; R/GA, 2007a; Nike, Inc., 2006). The information gathered can be received either on the media

<sup>56</sup> See Appendix 3 for a transcribed interview with S. Olander.

<sup>57</sup> “iPod is a brand of portable media players designed and distributed by Apple Inc.” (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/>). Nike+ sensor is only compatible with iPod nano and iPod touch players. An iPod can be purchased for \$140-399, depending on the model.

<sup>58</sup> The sensor can actually be also placed in any other sports shoe (i.e., by cutting a whole in a shoe sole (Noone, 2009)), but it is produced specifically for Nike shoe line.

player's screen, or be transferred in audio format and heard over the music (Gregory, 2007; McClusky, 2009; Vella, 2007).

A jogger can also opt for Nike+ SportBand<sup>59</sup>, which will collect all the above-mentioned information about the run, just as the iPod does, although it would give no feedback during the actual workout (Olander, 2008; Porges, 2008; Nike, Inc., 2009e). After the jogging, the collected data from any of the devices can be uploaded through an USB connector to the website <http://www.nikeplus.com/> (Gregory, 2007; Olander, 2008; McClusky, 2009; Porges, 2008; Matthews, 2007; Nike, Inc., 2009e).

### **Key features of Nike+**

Collecting the data from the workouts is just the starting point for the runner. As the digital media agency R/GA<sup>60</sup>, that helped Nike to create the digital experience of Nike+, explains: "Instead of fading into memories, your runs in the real world become meaningful assets in a digital world" (R/GA, 2007a, p. ¶5). The whole Nike+ experience comes after the running when the data is actually transformed into valuable information for the runner: it can be collected in a visual format, such as a diagram or graphic, stored, and then compared with other runners' data online (McClusky, 2009; Olander, 2008; R/GA, 2007a).

Nike+ website was designed in a way that (1) it was simple and easy to use; (2) it could motivate users to start or keep running through competition; (3) it helped users connect with like-minded people, and (4) it was fun (R/GA, 2007a). Thus, on Nike+ website members of the community could (Nike+, 2006-2009; Nike, Inc., 2009e):

- Track and store the information about their sports exercises.
- Personalize all the workouts according to the runner's mood, the weather, or the root of the run.
- Set different kinds of goals<sup>61</sup> for themselves, and monitor their progress.
- Set a coaching programme<sup>62</sup>, while getting training advice and support from the website and the community.

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<sup>59</sup> Nike+ SportBand can be purchased for \$59.

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix 3 for a transcribed video that was produced by the digital agency R/GA.

<sup>61</sup> There five types of goals a runner can set: (1) run more often, (2) run farther, (3) burn calories, (4) run faster, and (5) set a coaching programme.



**Image 4:** Two captures of the front page of Nike+ website. The menu on the horizontal bar invites the users to choose between “Runs”, “Goals”, “Challenges”, “Coach”, and “Mini” (Top). When users scroll down the site, they are also encouraged to click on “Share” on Twitter or Facebook, “Import” their email contacts, and “Invite” friends to join Nike+ (Bottom).

<sup>62</sup> Nike+ Coach programme consist of the following: start running, train for an event, train for a distance, and train for a sport.

- Network and socialise with other members of the community.
- Set challenges, compete with their friends or anyone around the world, and participate in events organized by others.
- Get motivated and inspired by a ‘mini version of a runner’. Community members can create a mini avatar (a model of the runner) on the website, which then would start ‘communicating’ with runners and encourage running more<sup>63</sup>.
- Connect their user accounts on Nike+ with their Facebook or Twitter accounts.
- See infomercials on how to use Nike+ devices or shop for running equipment.
- Map their running routes and share them with the others.
- Find new running challenges, as well as support and connection from other users, in the global forums (R/GA, 2007b).
- Download desktop widgets, and subscribe to RSS feeds (R/GA, 2007b).

All the above-mentioned functions helped to engage members of the Nike+ community, encouraging them to visit the website regularly, and not only after running. According to Nike, the company made so much information available online that extended “the foundation of Nike experience into a fun and active communication platform” (R/GA, 2007b, p. ¶6). As Olander (2008) explains:

*Once you start using it, you realise that it’s really hard to run without it. ... one of the most compelling and important things it’s not just a data at the time of the run. But the fact that it gives you a currency that you can keep it with you that you keep building. ... And all that makes for much richer experience after the actual run (Olander, 2008, p. ¶3).*

Additionally, the functions of the Nike+ community were design to allow and increase the interaction between the members (Gregory, 2007; Olander, 2008). As Olander (2008) points out:

*And once we started making it possible for anyone in the community to connect with anyone anywhere in the world, both through their running data, but also through our forums and just talking to people. It opened up the whole new world for this community that was never existent before. So you could do something what you did on a micro-scale with your friends, now you can do that with anyone. ... every single day you see how you are doing or how they are doing, but you don’t have to pick up phones and call each other (Olander, 2008, p. ¶3).*

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<sup>63</sup> See Appendix 3 for visuals of Nike+ website.

According to McClusky (2009) and Greene (2008), the fact that members could share their running experiences with other people in the community also worked as a huge motivational factor for them to achieve better results. As McClusky (2009) explains:

*Nike+ lets a user create a goal—one that other people can see. Let's say I pledge to run 100 miles this month. I can then enter the email addresses of people I'd like to cheer me on—my wife, my mother, my boss. As I sync up after each run, the data is uploaded to the site, and my support group is updated on my progress. The hope is that they'll use whatever techniques they can to try to motivate me. (One imagines praise, guilt, and threats, in that order) (McClusky, 2009).*

Image 5 shows the example of one blogger's experience while using Nike+ iPod Kit.

### 3.1.3. Nike+ results

#### **Nike+' marketing communication strategy**

*“Nike+ creates a completely new category where the product, the online experience and marketing are inseparable” (R/GA, 2007b, p. ¶4).*

According to Greene (2008), the key lesson to be learned from Nike is that the runners' online community Nike+ is not centred on Nike's brand itself. The whole idea of Nike+ looks genuine. It is all about sharing the experience, making running more fun, and helping other members to achieve better results (Olander, 2008). Olander (2008) suggests that, experimenting with social media platform, Nike realised about the need to offer some value to its consumers. Nike+ community has been the most significant initiative that they have taken so far:

*We have been really careful ... and really make sure that when we launch a new feature, when we improve something, the starting point isn't for us to figure out how we can know more about you, but, actually, how we can make your run better. And, I think, that balance is really important when you have the community and they're really sensitive to the fact that it is for them and by them” (Olander, 2008, p. ¶7).*

I'll start by saying, IT IS AWESOME! For a stat girl like me I can't wait to start charting all my runs and tracking them. The great thing, is it requires no work on your part besides plugging the iPod in. I was amazed.

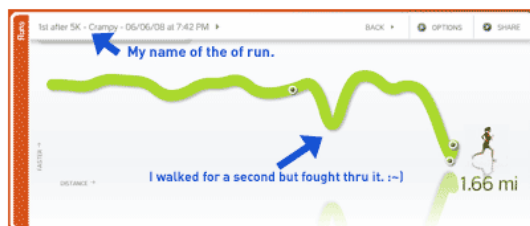
Here's how it works.

First, you need a Nano.

If you have the right nano you plug in a small device into the iPod. Then you put the little Nike chip in or on your shoe. I don't actually have Nike shoes so I used this shoe pouch and attached it to my laces.

That's it! Now go run!

When you get back, plug the iPod in to sync, it will ask you if you want to save the data and then viola you get a visual of your run, like this...



How COOL is that?!?

Now, I added the blue text to point a couple of things out like the ability to name and describe the run. I also loved the fact I could see where I walked for a few seconds. I just think this is really neat.

I don't know about you, but I find this very motivating. I just want to run so I can get a new little graph! (I'm such a geek)

I know some of you out there have used it, anyone want to share their opinion? Anyone not think it's the coolest gadget ever? Just curious. Honestly, I was quite shocked it was only \$29. It seems like a pretty fair price to me considering the ease of use and cool tracking stats.

Source: (Noone, 2008)

WAY back when <...> I wrote a review about little device called Nike+ iPod Sport Kit. At that time I was only running for a few weeks and recently finished my first 5K. I immediately LOVED the device.

Why?

1. First, <...> I'm one of those people who stayed up for hours and hours when I got my first iPod to "rip" all of my CDs. I love my iPod and I won't run without it anyway. So being able to track with it is a bonus!
2. Second, <...> have you seen my weight progress page? I swear it was on of the reasons I didn't miss a meeting while losing. I really didn't want a whole in my chart! (By the way.. I just noticed I haven't weighed in since JAN! wow time flies—I must go to meeting.)
3. Third, I like to be "in the know" when I'm running I need to know how far I've gone, how much I have left, and so on. Sometimes I don't have to know but I like knowing that I can know if I really want to know. Know what I mean? :) I really don't understand how people run WITHOUT some device that let's them know. Maybe it's because I don't pre-plan my routes much. I learned to run with the Nike+ so I guess you can say I'm spoiled. I hit a button and a little voice says "You've ran 1.7 miles." or ".6 miles to go." or my FAVORITE "You've just reached your goal of 8 miles." :)

Source: (Noone, 2009)

**Image 5: Blogger Veronica Noone's impressions about Nike+**



*In the past, the product was the end point of the consumer experience. ... Now it's the starting point. (Gregory, 2007)*

Moreover, Gregory (2007) states that Nike's attitude towards marketing communications and innovation was influenced by the digital revolution. Thus, at the moment "to Nike, you're no longer just buying a sneaker. You're joining a global jogging club – and keeping up with fellow runners will, the company hopes, motivate you to buy more Nikes" (Gregory, 2007). According to McClusky (2009), the success of Nike+ resides in its customer-oriented approach: instead of being product-centric, the community focuses on addressing the runners' needs. As the digital media agency R/G explains:

*Whereas most of initiatives focus on enticing the consumer to complete the purchase, Nike+ continues to engage the consumer long after the transaction has occurred, keeping Nike+ runners motivated and connected with each other and with a brand. ... Nike+ is revolutionising marketing. Consumers are expecting more from a brand than static outbound messaging, and Nike+ redefines how brand can reach its audience through meaningful personal experiences, two-way communication and innovative technology (R/GA, 2007b, pp. ¶6,18).*



**Image 6: Pictures from Nike Human Race 2009<sup>64</sup>**

Nike has undertaken a number of online and offline initiatives in order to promote Nike+. Among all of them, the annual running event Nike *Human Race* is probably the most ambitious one. The race, which was organized in 2008 for the first time, attracted more than 1 million participants in 27 cities around the globe in 2009 (Nike, Inc., 2009b; Nike, Inc., 2009c). In order to participate in the event, the runners had to run 10 kilometres with the Nike+ gear and later upload the running data to

<sup>64</sup> Images taken from (Nike, Inc., 2009c; Nike, Inc., 2009d).

the Nike+ website. They could do it in one of Nike hosted cities, or anywhere else they were that day (Nike, Inc., 2009a; Nike, Inc., 2009c).

Additionally, Nike+ is also present on the Internet-based radio and music community Last.fm<sup>65</sup>, as well as YouTube<sup>66</sup>, Twitter<sup>67</sup>, and Facebook:

- In 2006 the company created a group for the Nike+ community members who are using Last.fm to allow them to ‘store’ the data about their music preferences and get recommendations (Nike+, 2006).
- In 2007 Nike+ channel on YouTube was created (Nike+, 2007b). Since then, the company has uploaded 47 videos which, by the end of October 2009, had been watched all together more than 1.2 million times (Nike+, 2007b). The most popular clip was Nike+ television advert called “Need motivation?”<sup>68</sup> (Nike+, 2007b), that was viewed more than 750,000 times and had been commented more than 400 times in October 2009 (Nike+, 2007a).
- In October 2009 Nike+ Twitter account had more than 4,700 followers, as well as 60 Tweets on Nike+ news and challenges (Nike+, 2008). Nevertheless, both platforms seem to be abandoned by Nike, and have not been updated for few months (Nike+, 2007b; Nike+, 2008).
- In October 2009 there were also two groups called Nike+ on Facebook<sup>69</sup>, which together summed around 4,000 registered members. In the groups, created by Nike+ fans, users share information about themselves, disclose their ‘powersongs’<sup>70</sup>, and challenge each other.
- Additionally, according the agency R/GA, in 2007 “Over 400 sites carry Nike’s widgets or feature a Nike+ channel. Runners from every corner of the world have uploaded scraped

<sup>65</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.last.fm/group/Nike%252B%2BMusic%2BGroup#shoutbox>

<sup>66</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NikePlusTV#p/u>

<sup>67</sup> Available on URL: <http://twitter.com/nikeplus>

<sup>68</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfWTQA6QPk4>

<sup>69</sup> Available on:

<http://www.facebook.com/search/?init=srp&sfxp=&q=nike+plus#/group.php?gid=27492636814&v=wall&ref=search>, and

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2211841580&ref=search&sid=635402404.485712663..1#/group.php?gid=2211841580&v=wall&ref=search>

<sup>70</sup> Term employed by runners to refer to their most motivational song.

media from Nikeplus.com to their personal website, their page on their social site or their blog” (R/GA, 2007b, p. ¶14).

### **Nike+ - a partnership between two giant brands - Nike and Apple**

Nike has been always interested in innovations and product development initiatives (McClusky, 2009). They tried sports watches, heart-rate monitors, MP3 players together in collaboration with Philips (McClusky, 2009). However, it has not brought the company big success, not at least until their partnership with Apple.

By the year 2006, Nike was giving up its leader’s position in the running shoes market to its competitors (R/GA, 2007a). Thus, the company needed something to win back its position. “The marriage” between Nike and Apple happened when Nike’s engineers realised that the majority of runners enjoyed listening to music while they are jogging (Matthews, 2007; McClusky, 2009; Gregory, 2007; R/GA, 2007a). “Most runners were running with music already,” says Nike president and CEO Mark Parker. ‘We thought the real opportunity would come if we could combine music and data.” (McClusky, 2009). As Matthews (2007) points out, under the Nike+ system, the iPod becomes a runner’s coach, and his best running companion.

Thus, the partnership between the two companies attracted legions of people: from hard-core runners to amateur joggers (R/GA, 2007a; McClusky, 2009). During the product development process Apple was responsible for creating the sensor, whereas Nike had to adjust it to the running shoe line, and create an online platform to upload the data (McClusky, 2009; Gregory, 2007).

The partnership between the two brands has been one of the most influential factors in the triumph of the Nike+ project, since the companies’ products supplement each other very effectively (Matthews, 2007; Gregory, 2007; McClusky, 2009; Ramaswamy, 2008). “The combination of innovative, mobile technology, online communities and athletic gear expands the field for co-creation” (Ramaswamy, 2008).

### **Measuring the success of Nike+**

McClusky (2009) claims that Nike succeeded in creating the biggest runners' community worldwide due to its ability to combine a successful product with a social media platform. The community keeps on growing every day, and by the end of October 2009 counted with more than 2 million members, who have collectively ran more than 281 million kilometres (Nike, Inc., 2009c) and "burned more than 13 billion calories" (McClusky, 2009).

The \$29 Nike+ Sport Kit, and the \$59 Nike+ SportBands brought \$56 million on sales for the company in 2008 (Greene, 2008). According to Stefan Olander (2008), Nike+ also helped the company to increase the sales of other complementary products, such as running shoes, becoming leaders in the market:

*We've seen grate conversions. ... it gives us tremendous opportunity if someone is used to running in another brand and they like another brand, once you start using Nike+, you have a really good reason to try out Nike's line of shoes. ... so if ... someone is used to another brand, the only reason could be communication, now another reason is the community, and you have another reason to try it out. And we have seen great results in terms of increasing our market share through Plus. ... you have to look at this through longer-term lens, and it's been phenomenal for us to see how that just became a gateway into Nike brand (Olander, 2008, p. ¶9).*

As Greene (2008) points out, it is difficult to find correlation between Nike+ online community and the bottom line of the company. However, Nike's running-shoes market share in the USA grew from 48 percent in 2006 to 61 percent in 2008 (Greene, 2008). According to R/GA agency, Nike+ was really successful for the company:

*Nike+ is reinventing running as a fun, social, digitally enhanced sports. It has re-established Nike's dominance in the category as countless runners new to a brand has discovered the superior performance of Nike running shoes. And former loyalists around the world are now reconnecting with the brand (R/GA, 2007b, p. ¶17).*

Nike+ had to fulfil the needs of a wide range of users, "from geeked-out marathoners to everyday fitness joggers" (R/GA, 2007a). According to McClusky (2009), the company did not want their gadget to become too complex, and difficult to understand. Nike wanted to "keep it simple" (R/GA, 2007a).

Nonetheless, the company needed to accept the fact that they also need to learn from the community, and they cannot be the only ones setting the rules for the communication with Nike+ users. Stefan Olander says:

*We've learned a lot from the community. ... We have open forums and they have the ability – as the consumers – to come and participate. If there are things that we can improve, which ... we get to learn that so fast from our community and get response to it. ... we help each other to get better and that's been tremendous feedback from the group ... I think, every category has something where both the use of data, and the use of social interaction can be used to really create something new that no one else has done before.” (Olander, 2008, p. ¶5).*

Apart from encouraging customers to buy Nike products, the Nike+ community has brought many benefits to the company, such as access to information about its customers that was not accessible before. Thus, through the Nike+ community, Nike has found out that (McClusky, 2009):

- During the winter season people in Europe and Africa run longer distances than in the US.
- The average workout of a runner is 35 minutes long.
- Sunday is the day of the week when most people go out to run, and most of them prefer doing it in the evenings.
- Nike+ users tend to set more goals for themselves after having some holidays, especially after New Year's Eve.
- Black Eyed Peas' song “Pump it” is the trendiest Powersong<sup>71</sup> amongst the members of the Nike+ community.
- If a new Nike+ user uploads the data of five workouts into the system, the possibilities of he or she keeping running and being a member of the community are very high. “At five runs, they've gotten hooked on what their data tells them about themselves” (McClusky, 2009).

Nike+ already “set the standards for how all brands will eventually live in the digital world” (R/GA, 2007b, p. ¶19).

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<sup>71</sup> Community members can choose their Powersong – a song that will give them extra motivation to hold on and reach their goal while working out (McClusky, 2009; Vella, 2007). All they need to do is just press the “Power button” to access it (Vella, 2007).

### 3.2. Case #2: The Lost Experience

*Lost* is a television series produced by the American Broadcasting Company (ABC)<sup>72</sup>, which follows the adventures of a group of plane crash survivors on a mysterious island. The show, which started in 2004, has been aired in five annual seasons since then. *Lost* became a popular success very quickly in each of the 210 territories in which it was broadcasted<sup>73</sup>, particularly in the US, the UK and Australia (Disney ABC Group, 2006a). According to the ABC, in 2006 *Lost* was “the fastest-selling TV series in Buena Vista International Television's (BVITV) history”<sup>74</sup> (Disney ABC Group, 2006a).

As part of the marketing communications campaign for promoting *Lost*, in 2006 ABC launched *The Lost Experience*, an alternate reality game (ARG), a successful campaign which lasted for six months (Maymann, 2008). The present section describes *The Lost Experience* initiative, which was based on a wide range of social media platforms and designed with the purpose of engaging the participants with the television series (Miller, 2006; ABC Entertainment, 2006; Disney ABC Group, 2006a).

#### 3.2.1. Pre-campaign stage

A strong fan base has been built around the show since its very beginning (Maymann, 2008). Since 2005 *Lost* fans, who call themselves *Lostaways* (The San Diego Union-Tribune, 2005) or *Losties* (Disney ABC Group, 2005), have got together at conventions and events organised by ABC,

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<sup>72</sup> The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) is an American television network, created in 1943. ABC Entertainment, the producer of the *Lost* series, is part of the ABC Television Network and is managed by Disney-ABC Television Group, a division of The Walt Disney Company. Other TV shows produced by ABC Entertainment include *Desperate Housewives*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Boston Legal*.

<sup>73</sup> According to ABC, *Lost* has ranked as one of the top three U.S. series on free TV channels in all those 210 countries. Furthermore, the show has become the American TV series with the highest levels of audience in Channel 4 (UK), and one of the top two TV series in Australia's Seven Network.

<sup>74</sup> Also known as Disney-ABC International Television.

developing a “cult-like” attention towards the series (Ahrens, 2005). Furthermore, the activity of the *Lost* community was already largely reflected online. In 2005, countless fan sites displayed all sorts of content, discussions, and speculations about the show on the Internet (Ahrens, 2005; The San Diego Union-Tribune, 2005). Additionally, there was also *Lostpedia*, the online encyclopaedia on *Lost*, which was created in 2005 by fans of the series<sup>75</sup>. As The Washington Post reported, *Lost* fans could “google for hours looking for gossip, tidbits, spoilers and hints as to what is going to happen” (Ahrens, 2005).

ABC has always contributed significantly to the amount of material on *Lost* which is available online. On the show’s official website<sup>76</sup>, fans can watch full episodes of the series, interviews with the actors and creators of the show, access to behind-the-scenes information, and download hundreds of pictures. Furthermore, they can also listen to the Official *Lost* Podcasts, get in touch with other fans of the series in the forums, or read the character’s biographies (see Appendix 4: Content of *Lost* Official Website.).

Before *The Lost Experience* was launched, ABC had already employed some unconventional approaches for promoting the show. Thus, as a part of the online marketing strategy for *Lost*, the network had created a number of fake websites which claimed to be the official sites of some of the characters and organisations featured in the show (Ahrens, 2005). For instance, ABC had created <http://www.oceanic-air.com/>, a phony website of the fictional organisation Oceanic Airlines, the company responsible for the plane crash that takes the characters to the mysterious island (Ahrens, 2005).

Encouraged by the experience with the site for Oceanic Airlines, the creators of *Lost* decided to go a step further (ABC News, 2006). As Mike Benson, senior vice president of marketing for ABC Entertainment, explains: “What we discovered was that by creating additional content for this show, we could create a marketing tool that would have fans more invested in the program, and if it was cool they’d share with their friends” (ABC News, 2006). Thus, in 2006, ABC embarked in an ambitious six-month marketing initiative, which was called *The Lost Experience*.

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<sup>75</sup> About *Lostpedia*: <http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Lostpedia:About>

<sup>76</sup> Available on URL: <http://abc.go.com/shows/lost>

### 3.2.2. *The Lost Experience campaign*

*The Lost Experience* was an alternate reality game (ARG) designed by the screenwriters and producers of *Lost* in order to keep the audience engaged during the break between the second and the third season of the show, which lasted from May to October 2006 (Miller, 2006; ABC Entertainment, 2006; Disney ABC Group, 2006a). According to ABC, the project was “a revolutionary interactive marketing endeavour”, “designed to further enhance viewers' relationship with the program” (Disney ABC Group, 2006a).

#### **But what is an ARG?**

As the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) points out, ARGs are a form of Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG) (IGDA, 2006), since they are designed to attract large scale audiences. However, while in any MMOG<sup>77</sup> players enjoy the game through the figure and evolution of an avatar, in an ARG players themselves are directly and actively involved with the game. In order to make the experience meaningful, ARGs deny being a game and claim “to be real” (IGDA, 2006). In this type of games players are encouraged to explore a particular story, solve plot-based challenges, and interact with game characters. Consequently, participants are involved with the narrative of the ARG and its characters (IGDA, 2006).

Technology is essential for this type of games. ARGs use the Internet as their main platform, for being an economical and effective way of making the players interact between them and share information (IGDA, 2006). Nevertheless, although ARGs are Internet-based, elements from the reality around the players are used during the game. Thus, a number of advertisements, organisations, websites, telephone lines, and fictional characters are normally created exclusively for the game experience (IGDA, 2006).

Overall, ARGs overlap the game world with reality by utilizing real media and delivering an interactive narrative experience to the players. The genre is not just a new direction in gaming, but also an evolution of media and creative narrative. ARGs are growing in popularity, with new games

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<sup>77</sup> The World of War would be an example of Massively Multiplayer Online Game (MMOG). The present study has classified this form of social media as “online gaming”, and consider that its purpose is “entertainment”. See Appendix 1: Social Media Types.



appearing regularly (IGDA, 2006). ARGs tend to be free to play, with costs absorbed either through supporting products, or because they support or promote an existing product (IGDA, 2006).

### **3.2.2.1. Key features of *The Lost Experience***

The present section reviews the main characteristics of *The Lost Experience* as (1) a global campaign launched in 2006; (2) built by the creators of *Lost*; (3) aligned with the “essence” of the series; (4) directed to both fans and non-fans of the show; and (5) designed as a multimedia experience.

#### **A world-wide campaign**

*The Lost Experience* was developed by ABC in partnership with Channel 4 Television in the UK and Seven Network in Australia (Disney ABC Group, 2006a)<sup>78</sup>. As The New York Times advanced just when the campaign began: “broadcasters from around the world would release clues in a variety of formats and that players would have to join forces online to solve them” (Miller, 2006).

#### **A way of enlightening the viewers**

Another key feature of *The Lost Experience* is that the game was not conceived by marketers but the creators of the show (Miller, 2006). *The Lost Experience* operated as a way of discovering information about two organisations that are crucial to the show: *The Dharma Initiative*<sup>79</sup> and *The Hanso Foundation*<sup>80</sup> (Channel 4, 2007; Disney ABC Group, 2006b). As Carlton Cuse, executive producer of *Lost* explains:

*We sort of felt like the Internet Experience was a way for us to get out mythologies that we would never get to include in the show. I mean, because this is mythology that doesn't have an effect on the character's lives or existence on the island. We*

<sup>78</sup> See Appendix 4: ABC Group Press Release (25 April 2006).

<sup>79</sup> The Dharma Initiative, also written DHARMA (Department of Heuristics and Research on Material Applications), is a fictional research project featured in the television series. According to the show, The Dharma Initiative project was carried out during the 1970s and 1980s on the same island in which the story takes place twenty years later. In the story, the main characters will be finding the mysterious remains of the project during their stay on the island. Discovering the mission of The Dharma Initiative will be one of the main challenges for the survivors of the plane crash (ABC, 2009).

<sup>80</sup> *The Hanso Foundation* is the name of the organisation in charge of *The Dharma Initiative*, the mysterious project which was carried out on the island. The majority of the information available about the *The Hanso Foundation* was actually delivered to the fans of the show through *The Lost Experience Project*. Almost no information about *The Hanso Foundation* is featured in the television series (ABC, 2009).

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*created it for purposes of understanding the world of the show but it was something that was always going to be sort of below the water, sort of the iceberg metaphor, and the Internet Experience sort of gave us a chance to reveal it (BuddyTV, 2007).*

### **A narrative aligned with the show story**

The narrative of the ARG was aligned with the mystery and uncertainty that characterises the *Lost* series (Miller, 2006). Understanding of computer and mathematical coding, classical mythology and cryptology were some of the abilities that were requested from the players in order to solve the clues and make progress in the game (Channel 4, 2007). Therefore, collaboration between the players was necessary. As Tracy Blacher, Head of Marketing New Media at Channel 4, points out:

*There were days where I'd come in and there were hundreds of blogs reporting on clues and being updated with information, gathering together a cold calling for people with different skills sets, from Physics degrees to Maths (Channel 4, 2007).*

### **A wide target**

*The Lost Experience* campaign was designed to engage the viewers of the show in “a genuinely innovative and creative way” (Disney ABC Group, 2006a). However, since the narrative of the game was parallel to the main show, those who had not watched *Lost* before were also able to participate (Disney ABC Group, 2006b). According to Tracy Blacher, the game was: “like a giant, mysterious jigsaw puzzle that will come to life for all the world to solve, whether you are a fan of the TV series, or not” (Channel 4, 2007).

### **A multimedia experience**

Although *The Lost Experience* was Internet-based, clues and story content were not limited to the online world (Disney ABC Group, 2006b). As in any other ARG, a wide variety of offline and online formats were used: “The game, of a genre called alternate-reality games, is a multimedia treasure hunt that makes use of e-mail messages, phone calls, commercials, billboards and fake Web sites that are made to seem real” (Miller, 2006).

All the different online and offline media employed in each stage of the project will be described in the following section.

### **3.2.2.2. The Lost Experience phases**

The ARG *The Lost Experience* was mentioned for the first time in one of the official podcasts of the show posted in March 2006 (ABC Entertainment, 2006), in which executive producers Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse talked about the website of the fictional organisation *The Hanso Foundation*. In the audio file, the producers of the show advanced to the fans the launch of “an Internet experience” in May 2006 (ABC Entertainment, 2006), whose purpose was to “satisfy the desire for new material on *Lost* during the summer” and that it was going to be “a path that will lead to a lot of information about the show” that it would be helpful to understand the story (ABC Entertainment, 2006)<sup>81</sup>.

According to Channel 4, *The Lost Experience* campaign could be divided into four two-month phases, which lasted from May to October 2006 (Channel 4, 2007)<sup>82</sup>. In the following description of *The Lost Experience*, the main online and offline media actions undertaken in the project will be described.<sup>83</sup>

#### **Phase 1: From May to June 2006**

In the first stage of the project, several false commercials were aired in the three TV channels participating in the experience: ABC (US), Channel 7 (Australia), y Channel 4 (UK) (Disney ABC Group, 2006a). The videos, broadcasted during the commercial breaks of *Lost*, pretended to be a short promotion of the fictional organisation *The Hanso Foundation*<sup>84</sup>. The commercials, which were available in different versions, invited viewers to visit <http://thehansofoundation.org/>, <http://www.hansocareers.com>, and <http://letyourcompassguideyou.com>, three websites that had been specifically created for the experience<sup>85</sup> (Channel 4, 2007). A phone number was displayed in

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<sup>81</sup> See Appendix 4: Transcript from an official ABC podcast (25 April 2006).

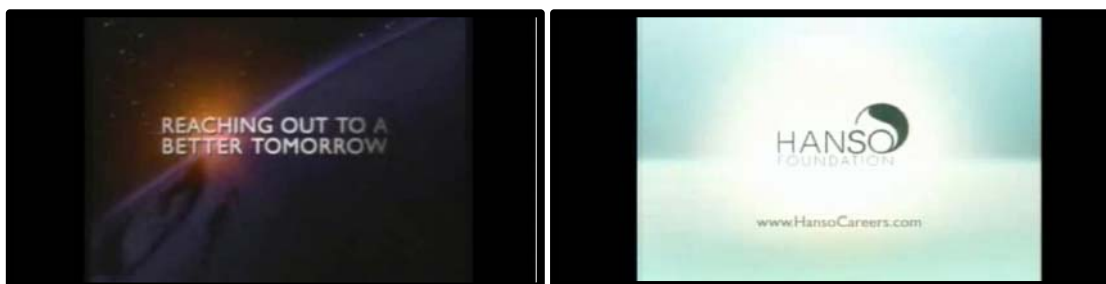
<sup>82</sup> See Appendix 4: Transcription of the short documentary about *The Lost Experience* shown in Channel Four.

<sup>83</sup> While conducting the present analysis, the researchers of this paper encounter information related to other media supposedly created for *The Lost Experience*. However, such data was mainly User Generated Content (UGC) found in *Lost* fan sites. Thus, the researchers of this paper opted for mentioning only those actions confirmed by the creators of the experience in solid references. As mentioned in the text, the main online and offline media used in the project is indeed described in the present paper.

<sup>84</sup> See Appendix 4: Transcript of one of *The Hanso Foundation* commercials.

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.hansocareers.com>, and <http://letyourcompassguideyou.com> are no longer available.

a different version of the commercials, which encouraged the audience to call in order to obtain further information about the foundation.<sup>86</sup>



**Image 7 and 8: Two captures of *The Hanso Foundation* commercials appeared on TV during May 2006.**

On the websites, the participants were encouraged to find a number of clues that a fictional hacker, called Rachel Blake, had hidden in them (Channel 4, 2007). Through her clues, Rachel let the players know that she was determined to reveal the truth behind “the supposedly altruistic Hanso Foundation”, and to locate its founder, Alvar Hanso (Channel 4, 2007).

During the first phase of *The Lost Experience*, ABC also launched the website <http://www.insidetheexperience.com> in order to compile all the pieces of the puzzle that were found by the participants, and make sure that all the participants were making progress at the same time (IGDA, 2006).

Additionally, the figure of DJ Dan, who would support Rachel Blake’s anti-conspiracy initiative during the whole project, was also created. During *The Lost Experience*, several podcasts encouraging Rachel’s investigation will published on DJ Dan’s website, <http://www.djdan.am/> (Hi-Res!, 2007; Disney ABC Group, 2006c)

### **Phase 2: From June to July 2006**

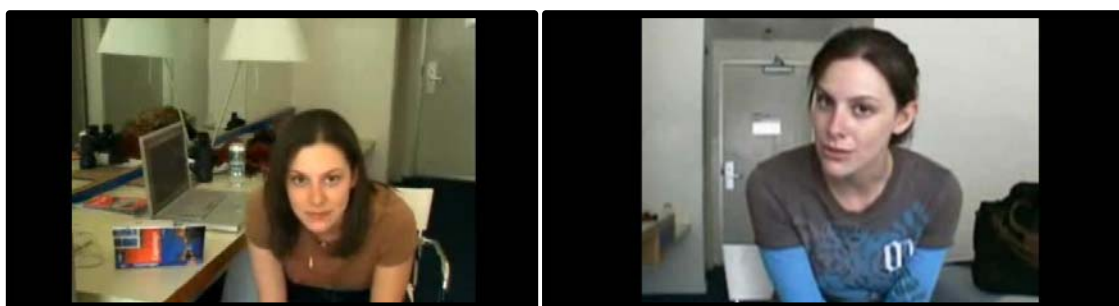
In the second stage of the project, *The Hanso Foundation* website was shut down because, apparently, the organisation had noticed the hacking activities of Rachel (Channel 4, 2007). Nevertheless, an URL had been hidden within the remains of the site in order to be discovered by

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<sup>86</sup> 0800 66 66 40 in the UK and 1 877 HANSORG in USA (See Appendix 4: Transcript of one of *The Hanso Foundation* commercials).

the fans (Channel 4, 2007). The URL led the fans to <http://stophanso.rachelblake.com> and <http://rachelblake.com>, two blogs kept by character Rachel Blake<sup>87</sup> (Channel 4, 2007).

On her blogs, Blake displayed the video-diaries of her investigation on *The Hanso Foundation* (Channel 4, 2007). A total of ten videos were created for this stage of the game. The videos showed Rachel travelled many cities around the world, finding evidence about the terrible intentions of the corporation and spying on the members of the board<sup>88</sup>.



**Images 9 and 10: Captures of *Rachel Blake* video-diaries, published online during June and July 2006.**

In the videos, the ARG players were also informed about Rachel's background and her reasons for investigating the organisation. After her mother's death, Rachel found out that her education had been paid by a mysterious Danish scientific organisation, called *The Hanso Foundation*. Intrigued by this, Rachel began to investigate the corporation, realizing that they were involved in corruption. Consequently, Rachel was determined to reveal all the truth behind the mysterious *Hanso Foundation*, and wanted everyone to hear about it<sup>89</sup>.

### **Phase 3: From July to August 2006**

The third stage of the project started when character Rachel Blake interrupted a press conference offered by the actors of *Lost* in San Diego<sup>90</sup>. In her intervention, Rachel accused the actors of

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<sup>87</sup> <http://stophanso.rachelblake.com> and [rachelblake.com](http://rachelblake.com) websites are no longer available.

<sup>88</sup> See Appendix 4: Links to Rachel Blake's video-posts.

<sup>89</sup> See Appendix 4: Links to Rachel Blake's video-posts.

<sup>90</sup> See Appendix 4: Rachel Blake interruption of the *Lost* Q&A panel hold in San Diego.

cooperating with *The Hanso Foundation*, and invited the audience to visit her new website: <http://www.hansoexposed.com><sup>91</sup>

**Rachel Blake:** *You are protecting a very real, very dangerous organisation.*

**Actor:** *Look, it's not real. It's a television show.*

**Rachel Blake:** *It is real. The Hanso Foundation is real, The Dharma Initiative is real, Dr. Mittelwerk is real and he's doing terrible things. That's real. ... (continues)...and my name is Rachel Blake, and I am real! And if you want the truth you'll go to [hansoexposed.com](http://www.hansoexposed.com). ¶1-3)*<sup>92</sup>



**Image 11 and 12: Captures of Rachel Blake's interruption of the Lost Q&A Panel at Comic-Con'06. Rachel's T-shirt displayed the URL [www.hansoexposed.com](http://www.hansoexposed.com).**

In this phase of the project, the players were encouraged to find sixty different hieroglyphics which had been hidden in a variety of online and offline media (Channel 4, 2007). Some of the game-related websites, such as <http://rachelblake.com>, <http://stophanso.rachelblake.com>, <http://www.hansoexposed.com>, <http://www.djdan.am> and <http://www.insidetheexperience.com> contained hidden hieroglyphics in them. The hieroglyphics were also placed in outdoors locations, such as Times Square in New York<sup>93</sup>.

Once that all the hieroglyphics were put together, the game players were able to watch the 11th video recorded by Rachel and that revealed key information about *The Dharma Initiative* and *The*

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.hansoexposed.com> is no longer available.

<sup>92</sup> See Appendix 4: Rachel Blake interruption of the *Lost* Q&A panel hold in San Diego.

<sup>93</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73baMZMa2SU>

*Numbers*<sup>94</sup>, two of the main mysteries for the followers of the TV show (Disney ABC Group, 2006b).



**Image 13 and 14: Hieroglyphic found on DJ Dan's website (Left), and hieroglyphic displayed at Times Square in New York City (Right).**

#### **Phase 4: From August to September 2006**

In the fourth stage of the project some special chocolate bars, called *Apollo*, were specifically manufactured and distributed in selected stores all around the world (Channel 4, 2007). A website was also created for the *Apollo* bars<sup>95</sup>, which have appeared several times in the TV show (Channel 4, 2007). On its website the fictional *Apollo Candy Company* claimed to be a subsidiary of *The Hanso Foundation* (Channel 4, 2007).



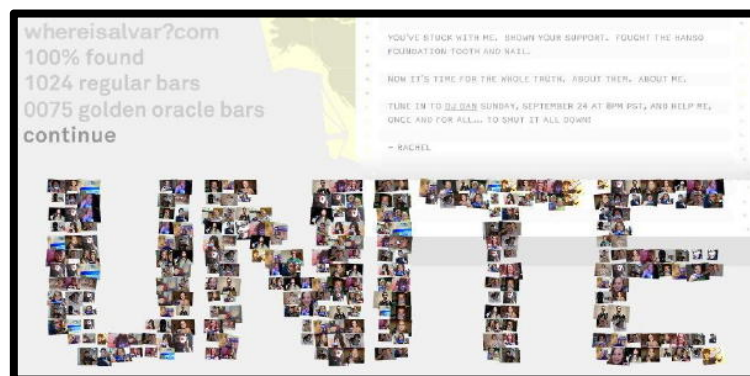
**Image 15 and 17: Apollo chocolate bars wrap (Left), and inside displaying the URL "whereisalvar.com" (Right). Captures from the short documentary about *The Lost Experience* shown in Channel Four. (Channel 4, 2007)**

Each *Apollo* bars had an URL engraved on it: [www.whereisalvar.com](http://www.whereisalvar.com), named after Alvar Hanso, founder of *The Hanso Foundation*, whose location Rachel Blake attempted to discover (Channel 4,

<sup>94</sup> See Appendix 4: Transcript of Rachel Blake's 11<sup>th</sup> video (aka *Sri Lanka* video).

<sup>95</sup> [www.apollocandy.com](http://www.apollocandy.com) website is no longer available.

2007). Participants accessing to the site were given directions by Rachel Blake on how to upload a picture of themselves with the bars. Rachel had promised that when enough participants had uploaded their images, she would reveal further instructions (Channel 4, 2007).



**Image 16: Overview of the website [www.whereisalvar.com](http://www.whereisalvar.com). The pictures uploaded by the fans with their *Apollo* chocolate bars built the word “UNITE”. Capture of the short documentary about *The Lost Experience* shown in Channel Four. (Channel 4, 2007)**

### **Phase 5: From September to October 2006**

ABC announced that the ARG *The Lost Experience* would come to an end on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2006, with a live radio Internet broadcast by DJ Dan” (Disney ABC Group, 2006c). During his broadcast, DJ received a call from Rachel Blake, who announced she had posted her final video online (Hi-Res!, 2007). Rachel’s video showed the conversation that Blake had with Alvar Hanso when she found him. In the video, Hanso praised her heroism, confessed the bad intentions of *The Hanso Foundation*, and revealed to Rachel that she was his daughter<sup>96</sup>.

Thus, Rachel Blake completed her investigation about the mysterious organisation with the help of all the participants in the game. The ARG *The Lost Experience* was therefore finished. During the course of the game, players have followed the adventures of Rachel, connected with other fans of the television series, and gathered extra information about the background of key organisations in the show.

<sup>96</sup> See Appendix 4: Transcript of Rachel’s Blake Final Video (aka *Norway Video*).





**Image 17: Screenshot of the homepage of DJ Dan's website (Left), and capture of Alvar Hanso as shown in the final video by Rachel Blake (Right).**

### **3.2.3. After *The Lost Experience***

According to Channel 4, "Rachel was an amazing success". At its zenith Google used to deliver more than 6 million search results when searching for *The Lost Experience* (Channel 4, 2007). Furthermore, only in the U.K. there were around 50,000 unique players participating, 50,000 unique callers to the initial phone line (Phase 1 of *The Lost Experience* project), and more than 7 terabytes of traffic per month (Channel 4, 2007).

Nevertheless, not only could *The Lost Experience* success be measured by the number of registered players participating in the game, but also by all the user-generated-content which generated, such as fan sites, blogs and forums. As Forde and Blacher explain (Channel 4, 2007):

*...There was hundreds of podcasts put together. There was thousand and thousand of blogs...It just kind of spiralled into this massive snowball of excitement. (Steve Forde, New Media Marketing Manager at Channel 4).*

*I was blowing away on a daily basis by just how passionate were about what was being created, and about how complex the mystery solving became. So there were days where I'd come in and there were hundreds of blogs reporting on clues and being updated with information (Tracy Blacher, Head of Marketing New Media at Channel 4).*

According to BusinessWeek, the online activity of the *Lost* community has only increased since *The Lost Experience*: “dozens and dozens of blogs and chat forums sprang up, created by fans to share theories” (Lowry, 2006)<sup>97</sup>. At the moment, *Lost* is present in the main social media platforms:

- There is an official ABC-*Lost* channel on YouTube<sup>98</sup>, in which fans can watch the best moments of the series, as well as interviews with the actors and the crew. Some other YouTube channels totally run by fans of the show, such as *Lost-Promos*, *sneak peeks*, *recaps and more*<sup>99</sup>, which in October 2009 counted with 7,197 subscribers.
- ABC has also created a Twitter profile for the show<sup>100</sup>, which in October 2009 had 716 followers. The official Twitter page for *Lost* is, however, less successful than other ones created by fans in the same platform, such as *Lost\_on\_abc*, which had 70,604 followers registered in the same date<sup>101</sup>.
- *Lost* is also present in *Second Life*, where there is a virtual island for the fans to gather together<sup>102</sup> (SL-*Lost*, 2007). *Lost* fans in *Second Life* have created their own online community, called SL-*Lost*<sup>103</sup>, “because of a mutual interest in creating an entirely new fan base, one that meets to discuss episodes of LOST in a virtual setting” (SL-*Lost*, 2007). According to them, SL-*Lost* “It is a combination of people from all over the world with two things in common: *Second Life* and being fans of the show LOST” (SL-*Lost*, 2007).
- Additionally, *Lost* has its own official page on Facebook<sup>104</sup>. The page, which had more than 1 million of fans in October 2009, allows users to post comments, watch some videos on the show, and engage in discussions with other fans of the series. Figure 4 shows some of the fans’ comments, posted on *Lost*’s page on Facebook.

<sup>97</sup> See Appendix 4: List of some *Lost* fan websites, blogs, and online communities.

<sup>98</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/abclost>

<sup>99</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/user/campetin?blend=2&ob=4>

<sup>100</sup> Available on URL: <http://twitter.com/LostOfficial>

<sup>101</sup> Available on URL: [http://twitter.com/LOST\\_on\\_abc](http://twitter.com/LOST_on_abc)

<sup>102</sup> Video which displays the *Lost* virtual island in *Second Life*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoDGEhoXQCK>

<sup>103</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.sl-lost.com/about-us/>

<sup>104</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.facebook.com/LOST?v=wall&ref=search#/LOST?v=wall&ref=search>

**Jonathan Cabildo:** I just started watching this last week! Awesome show! \*started season one at abc.com\*

Posted on 22 Oct 09

**Angela Perez:** two months and lost will be back on air!! i really hope that they make a movie or at least a tv movie. theres is a LOT of questions unanswered. i dont think that season 6 will answer all of them. especially why richard was choosen from his crew and doesn't age.

Posted on 22 Oct 09

**Nancy Treto:** why must we wait for so long for Lost to come back?!!

Posted on 22 Oct 09

**Kim Robinson:** i dont want it to end

Posted on 22 Oct 09

**Donna Kisner-King** LOVE IT! LOVE IT! LOVE IT! LOVE IT! LOVE THIS SHOW!!!!!!

Posted on 22 Oct 09

**Figure 4: Comments retrieved from Lost's Facebook page in October 2009.**

Since the series began, ABC has also employed innovative distribution approaches for *Lost*. As it was mentioned previously, in the US *Lost* fans can watch the full episodes for free on the official website of the show. In July 2006, few months after the initiative started, 11 million videos have been streamed already (Lowry, 2006). Furthermore, *Lost* episodes can be downloaded online from *iTunes Store*<sup>105</sup>, and thus watched in computers and media player devices, such as *iPods*. As Michael Benson, Senior Vice-President for Marketing at ABC Entertainment, explains: “‘*Lost*’ is like a candy store of marketing. We could have just done on-air promos and taken the occasional ad

<sup>105</sup> The *iTunes Store* is a software-based online digital media store operated by Apple Inc. since 2003. On *iTunes Store*, users can purchase and download music, movies, TV shows, podcasts and audio-books (<http://www.apple.com/itunes/whats-on/>).

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in ‘TV Guide’. But we thought, ‘What about TiVo, DVDs, the iPod, and the Internet?’ They are all huge opportunities to drive people back to TV” (Lowry, 2006).

In December 2007, ABC launched *Find 815*<sup>106</sup>, its second ARG related to the *Lost* series (Jensen, 2008). ABC worked in this project in collaboration with the Australian marketing agency Hoodlum (Jensen, 2008; Hoodlum, 2007). The ARG lasted a total of five weeks, considerably less than *The Lost Experience* (Hoodlum, 2007). The project consisted of a “global viral campaign” which employed high definition video scenes, and also deployed “hidden clues and strategy games to draw users into the mystery” (Hoodlum, 2007). *Find 815* was one of the finalists in the *Creative Arts Emmy Awards 2008* for the “Interactive Media” category (Academy of Television Arts & Science, 2008). According to Hoodlum (2007), “‘Find815’ provoked an incredible response from the blog world, with users analysing every inch of the game for clues and sharing their findings. By the end of the online drama Find815 had built a large and dedicated global fan base of registered users” (Hoodlum, 2007).

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<sup>106</sup>ARG *Find 815* is now over, its official website was <http://www.find815.com/>

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. *Nike+* online community and *The Lost Experience* through the postmodern lens

The present section discusses the two cases analysed in Chapter 3 in relation with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Relevant aspects of the use of social media in the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* campaign will be commented, and then related to the main conditions of postmodernity.

#### 4.1.1. *Social media marketing strategies*

The Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* campaign can be considered social media marketing initiatives. As the digital marketing company iCrossing state: (1) they allow users to *participate* in the creation of the content; (2) they offer easy to access information; (3) they facilitate *conversation* and *community* formation; (4) they link to other websites, posts, and articles; and (5) they provide *connectedness* (iCrossing, 2007). Briefly, both Nike Inc. and ABC employed Internet-based strategies for marketing purposes.

Overall, both social media marketing initiatives characterise by focusing on building relationships with their users, employing the Internet as an umbrella, encouraging the creation of communities, and being based on partnerships between two or more companies.

#### **Establishing relationships**

Through their social media marketing initiatives, the companies did not pursue to sell any product directly, but to “create good positive word-of-mouth and buzz, and engage people” into “a communication process together with Nike” (Ives, 2004; Notaro, 2008; Oser, 2004) and “designed to further enhance viewers' relationship with the program” in the case of *Lost* (Disney ABC Group, 2006a). In both cases the consumer, and not the product, was the centre of the relationship. The *Lost Experience* and the Nike+ community supplied the corporations with an international fan

community and “a global jogging club” respectively, since they managed to provide consumers with relevant content and an online environment in which they enjoyed participating in (Weber, 2007). As Nussbaum (2007) explains:

*The key is to build a wide community space about something important to people and give them the tools to communicate and create their own stuff. Sure, have your product/service/ whatever there for people to see and perhaps choose but don't “sell” them. You can't hard sell consumers any more. You must now establish a relationship with people, partner with them, co-create with them. Nike+ does all that. And the site looks great too (Nussbaum, 2007).*

### **Internet as an umbrella**

Although strongly complemented with analogue media, the Nike+ community and ARG *The Lost Experience* were Internet-based marketing initiatives. In both cases, the Internet was the core of the marketing strategy followed, the hub in which all the marketing actions undertaken converged, and the space where consumers could take their consumption experience a step further. Overall, all the communication actions carried out in the two campaigns were integrated under an Internet umbrella. For instance, the activity of the Nike+ community has been also reinforced with a number of events, such as the annual *Human Race*. Although the interaction between the members of the Nike+ community takes place mainly on the Internet, users gather together in more than 30 cities all around the world in order to run collectively.

In particular, *The Lost Experience* campaign illustrates very well how companies can combine a wide range of online and analogue media in order to build a marketing strategy. ABC chose to implement an alternate reality game (ARG) in order to engage the participants with the television series. As an ARG, *The Lost Experience* was Internet-based, but also designed as a cross-media endeavour. The campaign used an innovative mix of media for the campaign, which included TV commercials, telephone line, live appearance of fictional characters, a number of events, and even chocolate bars. The Internet was the binding medium of the whole experience, since the analogue media employed continuously referred the players to the cyberspace. Thus, the TV commercials aired in May 2006 invited viewers to visit <http://thehansofoundation.org/>, <http://www.hansocareers.com>, and <http://letyourcompassguideyou.com> (Channel 4, 2007). Similarly, character Rachel Blake suggested players to visit the website <http://www.hansoexposed.com> during her interruption of the press conference in San Diego; and the Apollo Chocolate bars distributed during the fourth phase of the campaign had the URL address

whereisalvar.com engraved on them (Channel 4, 2007). Overall, *The Lost Experience* game fits completely with Jaokar et al. definition of social media marketing as “an interaction with a set of online social media conversations from marketing perspective, based on converged media (since conversations can span both technologies and the media)” (Jaokar *et al.*, 2009).

### **Community creation**

Before conducting such ambitious projects, both Nike Inc. and ABC had already explored the potential of social media and observed customer online activities and behaviours. Therefore, the organisations were conscious of the existence of online communities around their products, and opted for carrying out a social media marketing initiative in order to recruit more members, reinforce the sense of community, and improve customer relationships. Thus, *Lost* fans had a high level of activity on the Internet, and had created much user-generated-content about the show since its beginning. Consequently, social media became the main tool that ABC, Channel 4 and Channel 7 decided to employ for *The Lost Experience* campaign. Through their initiative, the networks attempted to increase *losties* or *lostaways* engagement during the break between two seasons of the show.

The case of the Nike+ community also exemplifies the creation of an online community around a brand and a product. Before building the platform for the Nike+ community, Nike had already tested the Internet as a medium through the *Art for Speed* blog, a viral campaign on YouTube, and *Joga.com*. In particular, the success of *Joga.com*, the online community for soccer lovers, demonstrated to Nike the high potential of social media as a tool to engage current and potential consumers in a conversation together with the company. Therefore, in 2006 Nike opted for a virtual community strategy in order to promote the range of products associated to the Nike+ line: the Nike+ sensor, the Nike+ iPod kit, and the Nike+ SportBand. Essentially, through the creation of a web-based community, the organisation added functional, social and entertainment values to its products. Thus, the Nike+ community provides its members with all the values that Sicilia & Palazón (2008) locate in virtual communities:

- a) *A functional value*: participants in the Nike+ community are provided with the innovative possibility of transforming intangible data, such as the kilometres run or the calories burnt, into shareable information. Therefore, the unique characteristics of the Nike+ products are

reinforced by the Nike+ community, which helps users to expand their experience. Rather than limiting the use of the products to the time they are exercising, users can store their data electronically when they arrive home and keep track of their progress.

Apart from those original features, the Nike+ community contains a high amount of useful information for runners. In the Nike+ community members have access to very specific and practical knowledge, which is provided through (1) a number of infomercials on how to use the different Nike devices or shop the right running equipment; and (2) the participation in the online forums, in which users are allowed to ask questions and give feedback to fellow members. Additionally, participants in the community can also access to several jogging routes and maps, as well as detailed information on Nike+ events and competitions all around the world.

- b) *A social value*: in the Nike+ community users can obtain support from other members of the Nike running community, challenge and compete with each other, receive advice and motivation, and socialise with others. The social aspect of the Nike+ community is very important. The virtual relationships with like-minded people can motivate Nike+ users to run more and, consequently, to keep using Nike products. The factors are interrelated: because they are able to interact with each other and share their results, users are motivated and continue exercising and participating in the community.
- c) *An entertainment value*: the functional and social values of the Nike+ community contribute to make the experience of the users more enjoyable. Thus, the members of the community can spend hours online, socialising and gathering information about the practise of running. Furthermore, the community also counts with a number of entertaining elements, such as (1) desktop widgets and ‘scrapable’ media; (2) the possibility of building the mini version of a runner; and 3) the option to connect a Nike+ profile to a Twitter or Facebook account.

First, the formation of the Nike+ community helped to establish a two-way communication process between the company and its customers. From a social media perspective, the content of the Nike+ community can be considered high-quality since: (1) it balances professional and customer-generated content (Weber, 2007); (2) it is not just an “egocentric display of products and services”,



but it focuses on the customers and their problems (Scott, 2007); 3) it provides information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009); 4) it is delivered to consumers when they need it, not just when it is broadcasted as traditional advertising (Scott, 2007).

Second, the Nike+ community contributes to customer-to-customer communication and to the creation of a community around a brand. The communal aspect of Nike+ is very relevant from a postmodern perspective. The Nike+ community meets both the individualistic and communal needs of postmodern consumers. The Nike+ users can practice exercise on their own, and share their experience with others when they arrive home. Thus, the community allows its users to enjoy their own individualism, while running ‘virtually’ with others. Nike customers are not running alone any longer, because they are sharing their experience with others.

### *Tribal elements*

The social media strategies carried out by Nike and ABC were not directed at massive audiences. In both cases, the companies focused on engaging specific groups of consumers. Consequently, the Nike + community and *The Lost Experience* presented a number of communal symbols and signs of identification which attempted to reinforce the sense of community amongst their members. In particular, the Nike+ and the *Lost* communities presented certain tribal characteristics, which as Cova (1997) points out, refer “to the re-emergence of quasi-archaic values” (p. 300) in the context of postmodernity.

Thus, in *The Lost Experience*:

- Participants were encouraged to join forces against a common ‘enemy’, represented by *The Hanso Foundation*, and guided by the figure of a ‘leader’, symbolised by character Rachel Blake.
- The community counted with a very specific and unique set of skills. As it was mentioned previously, understanding of computer and mathematical coding, classical mythology and cryptology were some of the abilities that were requested from the players in order to solve the clues and make progress in the game (Channel 4, 2007).
- A secret code was developed for the community. A number of hieroglyphics were created and placed in different locations in the online and offline world, forcing individuals to share their findings. Hieroglyphics represent the writing system, the private code, of a culture.

Normally surrounded by mystery due to their encrypting nature, the hieroglyphics strengthened the tribal values of the *Lost* community.

Similarly, members of the Nike+ community share a common sub-culture:

- In order to be part of the group, some objects (Nike products) are necessary. The Nike+ sensor, the Nike+ iPod kit or the Nike+ SportBand, and the Nike shoes could be seen as the sacred objects or symbols which provide access to the community. As Cova points out, “by paying, the postmodern individual can build an identity for themselves with cultural references (The French Doctors, Bosnia, Somalia), but also sporting references (the complete outfit of the OM supporter) and, in fact, all possible references” (p. 305). The complete kit of Nike + products is the sporting reference that helps Nike consumers to build an identity for themselves, as well as their sense of belonging to a community.
- Additionally, the Nike+ community present certain rituals of consumption, which take the shape of 1) the daily exercise performed by the members while consuming Nike+ products; and 2) the multiple marathons and sports events attended by the users of Nike+.
- As Chapter 3 has shown, the marathons organised by Nike act as the official ceremonies for the members of the community, who dress in the same colour and run through the streets of several cities as a Nike ‘legion’. The participants even paint their faces with the colours of their national flags in order to express their commitment.

As Cova (1996) and Simmons (2008) point out, postmodern individuals aspire to be distinguish themselves from the rest and feel unique while, at the same time, they aim to connect with like-minded people. Nike and ABC developed social media experiences which met both the individualistic and the communal needs of their consumers. The Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* would be highly valued by consumers because “through their linking value, permit and support social interaction of the communal type” (Cova, 1997, p. 305). They act as “the social glue” (Simmons, 2008, p. 305) between the members of the Nike+ community and *Lost* fans. The sense of community is also reinforced by the use of the language and the creation of images. Thus, in the homepage of the Nike+ community is possible to read the slogan ‘*Together we run*’, and the pictures uploaded by participants of *The Lost Experience* with their chocolate bars formed the word “UNITE”.

### **Establishment of partnerships**

None of the initiatives, the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* were undertaken uniquely by one company. Nike and ABC opted for building partnerships with other organisations in both cases. Thus, Nike developed the line of Nike+ products in collaboration with Apple, and the creation of the Nike+ community was part of Nike's tasks in the agreement (McClusky, 2009; Gregory, 2007), which as Gregory (2007) points out, set an example of partnership between "the world's top sporting-goods brand with the world's most beloved gadget<sup>107</sup>" (Gregory, 2007). Similarly, *The Lost Experience* was developed by ABC in partnership with Channel 4 Television in the UK and Seven Network in Australia (Disney ABC Group, 2006a). Undoubtedly, the collaboration between the networks contributed to the global reach of the campaign.

Through the establishment of partnerships with other reliable brands, the organisations reinforced the power of the initiatives, potentially increased the number of consumers reached, and went a stepped further in the achievement of "trust", which is a very important element for postmodern consumers (Giddens, 1991).

#### **4.1.2. *The postmodern conditions***

##### **Hyperreality**

Nike provided its customers with a platform in which a cyberculture could emerge within a network-based community, and satisfy the communal needs of its postmodern users (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 253). From a postmodern perspective, the Nike+ community is a virtual reality, an artificially-constructed place where users interact with each other. In the context of Nike+ community, consumer-to-consumer communication takes place mainly in the cyberspace, although some offline interactions occur when community members meet at the sports events organised in order to complement the marketing strategy.

The hyperreal factor is especially visible in the case of *The Lost Experience*. As it was mentioned previously, one of the main characteristics of the ARG was that the game claimed to be real. A non-distinction between reality and fiction have always characterised the marketing communications of *Lost*. Thus, before *The Lost Experience* began in May 2006, ABC had already created other fake

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<sup>107</sup> Apple's iPod.

websites such as the one dedicated to the fictional organisation *Oceanic Airlines*. According to ABC, it was the success of such an unorthodox marketing tool that encouraged them to venture into a project like *The Lost Experience*.

Thus, ABC, Channel 4 and Channel 7 used a number of traditional communication channels, created different websites, and employed actors in order to recreate the fictional world of a television series. Apart from the television commercials and the corporate website of *The Hanso Foundation*, the *Apollo* chocolate bar was another element which was extracted from the fictional universe of *Lost* and placed into the reality. As Firat and Venkatesh (1995) point out, “an aspect of hyperreality is the inclination or willingness among members of the culture to realize, construct, and live the simulation” (p. 252). Through *The Lost Experience*, ABC and its partners help *Lost* fans submerged themselves in a constructed world, based on their favourite show, that blurred the limits between the real and non-real.

Overall, ABC recreated the world of *Lost* and simulated, with the help of all the participants, that the narrative of the show was real. The peak of the non-distinction between fiction and reality took place when Rachel Blake interrupted a press conference that the actors of *Lost* were holding in San Diego. A fictional character, which until then had only existed in the virtual world of the game, stepped into the reality of the participants and materialised in front of all the attendees at the event in order to prove that ‘she was real’:

**Rachel Blake:** *You are protecting a very real, very dangerous organisation.*

**Actor:** *Look, it's not real. It's a television show.*

**Rachel Blake:** *It is real. The Hanso Foundation is real, The DHARMA Initiative is real, Dr. Mittelwerk is real and he's doing terrible things. That's real. ... (continues)...and my name is Rachel Blake, and I am real! And if you want the truth you'll go to [hansoexposed.com](http://hansoexposed.com). (§1-3)<sup>108</sup>*

## **Fragmentation**

*The Lost Experience* was conceived as “a giant, mysterious jigsaw puzzle” (Channel 4, 2007) whose pieces had to be put together by the participants in the ARG. Thus, the information necessary to progress in the game was provided to the players via a number of multimedia actions, which comprised TV commercials, phone calls, a number of fake blogs and websites, video-podcasts, and billboards. Furthermore, *The Lost Experience* did not have an official site on the Internet which

<sup>108</sup> See Appendix 4: Rachel Blake interruption of the *Lost* Q&A panel hold in San Diego.

could centralise all the data related to the ARG, and the information about the game spread all over the cyberspace. The fragmented condition of the game was evident during the third phase of the campaign, when the 11<sup>th</sup> video posted by Rachel Blake<sup>109</sup> was divided in sixty fragments which had a number of hieroglyphics assigned to them. Participants in *The Lost Experience* had to find and gather all the hieroglyphics, located in all types of media platforms and physical locations all around the world, in order to watch the complete video.

According to Firat and Venkatesh (1995), fragmentation means “the breaking up into parts and erasing of the whole, single reality into multiple realities, all claiming legitimacy, and all decoupling any link to the presumed whole” (p. 253). In postmodernity, fragmentation affects all activities and aspects of life, experience, society and metanarratives. ARG *The Lost Experience* encouraged players to explore offline and online media simultaneously and accept that the information was “disjointed” in the form of images (hieroglyphics and billboards), videos (TV commercials and video-podcasts), audio (podcasts), objects (chocolate bars), websites, and events (*Lost* press conference interrupted by Rachel Blake). *The Lost Experience* was aligned with the intrigue which characterises *Lost*, but also contributed to clarify some of the mysteries of the show. The campaign encouraged the theorisation about the story and contributed to fill in some of the information gaps that fans might have.

### **Reversal of production and consumption**

The reversal of production and consumption is one of the main conditions of postmodernity. As Gregory (2007) states, “in the past, the product was the end point of the consumer experience ... Now it's the starting point”. In postmodernity the limits between consumption and production are blurred, since users actively produce symbols and signs during their consumption activities (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Participants in *The Lost Experience* were provided with a high amount of content about *Lost*, which facilitated the creation of completely customised experiences. Moreover, participants in the game were not passive subjects seated in front of the computers, but had to play actively in order to progress in the game. Thus, players had to hunt for clues, interact with each other, and discuss about their next steps.

Similarly, Nike+ users are not only producing data during their consumption of the Nike+ products, but also through their membership at the Nike+ community. Thus, members of the online

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<sup>109</sup> Also known as the *Sri Lanka video* (See Appendix 4: Transcript of Rachel Blake's 11<sup>th</sup> video).

community are contributing to create a big puzzle, composed of all the individual profiles of the users. From a marketing perspective, participants in the Nike+ community are voluntarily contributing to the creation of an enormous database. The virtual community could be seen as a very valuable database, which stores information about the consumption activities of its users and their preferences, motivations, habits, aims and desires. Thus, through the community Nike found out, for example, that Sunday is the day of the week when most people go out to run; that during the winter users in Europe and Africa run longer distances than the ones in US; or that Black Eyed Peas' "Pump it" is the favourite song of the members (McClusky, 2009). The community allows Nike to obtain personal information about their customers and direct feedback about their products, which can be transformed into useful statistics or provide an exact picture of a particular customer at the same time. The Nike+ community acts, therefore, as a precise marketing tool for both tribal marketing and one-to-one marketing. As marketing agency R/GA states, "Nike Plus creates a completely new category where the product, the online experience and marketing are inseparable" (R/GA, 2007b, p. ¶4).

### **Decentred subject**

According to Firat and Venkatesh (1995), "given the suspicion that the subject was never the centre or in control, and coupled with the intention to free the subject (oneself) from commitment, postmodernism embraces the confusion (or the fusion) between the subject and the object" (p. 254).

The Nike+ community exemplifies the confusion between the subject and the object, the postmodern individuals' dependence of machines and technology to comprehend the world around them. As it was mentioned previously, Nike+ sensor, Nike+ iPod kit or Nike+ SportBand, and Nike shoes are the objects which provide access to the Nike+ community. Consequently, Nike+ users depend completely from Nike+ products in order to socialise with like-minded people. Additionally, it is the ability of the product/machine to convert analogue information, such as the calories burnt and the kilometres run, that allows users to have access to the utilitarian, social and entertaining values that the Nike+ community provides. First, the runners depend on the ability of the gadgets to generate information to monitor their workouts and lately share the data with other members of the community. Second, the users depend on the Nike+ community, as an Internet-based platform, to store their data, check their progress, interact with other runners, and get informed on running events.

Nike+ users depend on the performance of some product/machines because a development of technology, such as an improvement in the features of the gadgets or a faster Internet connection, will provide them with the ability to produce and process more information in less time. In other words, a better the performance of the gadgets will imply a better integration of the consumers in the online community, a higher fulfilment of their communal needs, and a better understanding of its (hyper)reality. In a globally connected world, the fact that individuals are running with a chip in their shoes and later summitting that information online, blurs the limits between their bodies and the machines. McClusky (2009) refers to it as “Living by Numbers- the ability to gather and analyze data about yourself, setting up a feedback loop that we can use to upgrade our lives, from better health to better habits to better performance.” From a marketing perspective, the consumer and the product become one in the Nike+ experience.

### **Juxtaposition of opposites**

As Firat and Venkatesh state (1995), pastiche is “the underlying principle of juxtaposition” (p 252). The fragmentation of ARG *The Lost Experience*, which has been described above, is an example of a pastiche of media initiatives that creates a fictional narrative. The game was designed “*like a giant, mysterious jigsaw puzzle*” (Channel 4, 2007) that the participants had to solve. Consequently, the content of the ARG was spread throughout a wide range of platforms and media, such as podcasts, websites, blogs, videos, TV commercials, and billboards. Nevertheless, *The Lost Experience* characterised by employing fragmentation and, at the same time, seeking unification. Although the ARG used pastiche and fragmented media as core elements of their marketing strategy, the game also encouraged the participants of the game to gather all the clues and build a complete message.

Additionally, both initiatives combined the communal and the personal experiences together. As it was mentioned previously, the Nike+ community satisfy both the individualistic and the communal needs of its members. In the Nike+ community, two opposite aspects of the same product co-exist together in harmony, balancing the experience of the postmodern user. From a marketing perspective, the community operates between two different approaches: one-to-one marketing and tribal marketing. Thus, the Nike+ community allows the company to obtain individual information about the consumers, who register themselves and upload information about their use of the Nike+ products and discuss about all variety of topics in the forums, such as the functionality of the products or their general interests. At the same time, through the online community the organisation

obtains direct feedback from its customers, as well as data analytics and statistics, which can be very useful for product development and marketing purposes. Thus, the qualitative and quantitative data that Nike gathers through the Nike+ community helps the organisation to adjust its strategy according to consumers' preferences, and customise the messages directed to both individuals and groups of consumers.

### **Chapter conclusion**

The Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* characterised by focusing on building relationships with their users, employing the Internet as an umbrella, encouraging the creation of communities, and the establishment of partnerships. Social media helped Nike and ABC to cope with some of the main problems that postmodernity has brought to them, such as the problem with traditional segmentation techniques (chaos) and consumer contradictions (confusion and complexity).

As it was mentioned previously, markets are becoming too fragmented and traditional marketing segmentation techniques, such as geographic or demographical segmentation, are no longer effective. In today's world consumers group themselves regarding their preferences and interests (Weber, 2007; Cova, 1997; Grönroos, 2007). Social media provided Nike and ABC with virtual platforms, in which consumers register and volunteer information about themselves. Thus, their successful social media marketing initiatives attracted users to compelling virtual environments which have been created for marketing purposes. Rather than selling their products, Nike and ABC focus on building relationships with consumers. Therefore, attracted by the possibility of obtaining the functional, social and entertaining values of the marketing initiatives, consumers agreed on establishing a two-way communication process with Nike and the networks responsible for *The Lost Experience*, as well as on facilitating to the company valuable information in the form of web analytics and statistics.

Furthermore, social media allowed Nike and ABC to address the needs of postmodern consumers due to its flexibility and intrinsic characteristics. Thus, through the social media marketing initiatives the companies:

- Established a two-way communication process between the companies and its customers, while allowing users to communicate between them (customer-to-customer).
- Addressed both the individual and communal needs of the users.



- Added extra value to their products. In particular, functional, social and entertaining values.
- Reflected the postmodern conditions highlighted by Firat and Venkatesh (1995) and, therefore, spoke to the users in ‘their own language’: hyperreality, fragmentation, reversal of production and consumption, decentred subject, and juxtaposition of opposites.
- Multiplied their possibilities of achieving consumer trust, due to their focus on building relationships with their customers and their partnerships with other big brands.

## **4.2. Theoretical foundation for the relationship between social media marketing and postmodernity**

In this section, a theoretical foundation for the interrelation between social media marketing and the postmodern approach to marketing is discussed. First, based on literature review in Chapter 2. Literature review, an academic definition of social media marketing is provided. Second, the relationship between social media and postmodernity is analysed. Lastly, some recommendations for companies which attempt to implement a social media marketing strategy are proposed.

### ***4.2.1. Defining social media marketing***

Before building a conceptual framework for social media marketing, it is necessary to establish a single definition of social media. Taking into consideration the main elements of the medium, as well as the definitions presented in Chapter 2 (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009; iCrossing, 2007; Demopoulos, 2006; Maymann, 2008), the authors of the present study propose the following definition:

*Social media is an online medium, which allows users of the Internet to become active producers of the content available online, by allowing them to interact with each other, create and exchange all kinds of data and, in the long term, cause the democratization of the information and media.*

In order to provide a theoretical foundation for social media marketing, the authors of this thesis put forward the following propositions:

*P1: Although in social media marketing the Internet becomes the main channel employed for an organisation's marketing communication activities, the medium is normally complemented with the use of analogue media.*

As Chapter 3 has shown, Nike and ABC employed the Internet as the main platform for their marketing and communication purposes. In order to get the full Nike+ experience, runners have to visit the online community, upload the data from their workouts, and interact with other users. In the case of *The Lost Experience*, the offline activities which supplemented the initiative always redirected participants to the cyberspace.

Thus, the Internet becomes the main channel for marketing and communication activities used by a company in social media marketing. The most commonly used communication channels in the past are now integrated under the umbrella of the Internet. Nevertheless, as the case studies conducted have shown, a social media marketing strategy which limits its reach to the online world is not enough. It becomes crucial to place references to the online activity of a company in the real world. Therefore, it is becoming more and more common to find references to the online activities of a company in traditional marketing communications activities, such as advertising. For example, almost two-thirds of the commercials shown during Super Bowl<sup>110</sup> in 2006 invited viewers to visit the website of the advertised companies (Weber, 2007).

Companies need to reinforce their online initiatives in the real world by finding a way to redirect consumers to the Internet. From this perspective, traditional one-way communication channels will help catch the attention of the consumers and persuade them to go online. Then, once a part of the target audience gets in touch with the online activities of the company, social media will contribute to build relationships and establish dialogue with them.

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<sup>110</sup> Super Bowl is The National Football league in the US, which is the most watched broadcasted show in America (Stelter, 2009)

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*P2: In social media marketing companies pursue to establish a dialogue with consumers, who become the core of the communications strategy.*

Social media should not be simply considered another communication channel available for organisations, since special knowledge is required to meet the expectations of the users.

The presented case studies showed that social media marketing strategy are created to engage consumers through (1) playful experiences, such as being a part of an ARG game in *The Lost Experience*, or challenge each other in the Nike+ community; (2) socialization, which is achieved through sharing experiences in the Nike+ community, or helping each other to find clues about the television series *Lost*; and (3) extra value in the consumption process, such as a tool which motivates users to exercise more, or discover further information about their favourite show.

*The Lost Experience* campaign and Nike+ encouraged communication between the two companies and their customers. In the case of *Lost*, the creators of the show were waiting for the players to gather all the hidden clues before releasing the new ones. They were also keeping the track on how the clues were traced and solved. Similarly, Nike has always encouraged its community to provide feedback through the forums, or by using the “feedback” button on every page of the website. Olander (2008) claims that before implementing any changes or innovations on the community, Nike always considered them first from a customers’ perspective. Additionally, it could be claimed that the companies were not only promoting their products, but the opportunity to become a member of the biggest running or an international fan community.

Hence, traditional marketing approaches<sup>111</sup> are very unlikely to be accepted by Internet users because they expect honesty, transparency, openness, and ability to participate in the dialogue on the platform of social media<sup>112</sup>. As a result, interaction and two-way communication with users are crucial for social media marketing. A company’s marketing communication should go beyond the utilitarian value of the product, and provide customers with experiential or/and social values (Firat & Dholakia, 2006), as well as compelling environments in which they can interact among them. This positions a consumer to the centre of the marketing strategy, as opposed to traditional marketing approaches in which companies are product-centric and focus on “pushing” marketing strategies and on the act of purchase (Firat & Dholakia, 2006).

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<sup>111</sup> See Weber’s description of “Old marketing” (Weber, 2007), and the definition of marketing provided by The American Marketing Association.

<sup>112</sup> See “the code of conduct” of the blogosphere in *section 2.2.4.1*.

*P3: The core elements of social media marketing are 1) providing extra value to consumers through engagement in the communication process, and 2) concentrating on building the relationship with a customer.*

Nike succeeded in creating an online community and provided its users with utilitarian, social and entertaining value through the creation of an engaging social media platform. The fact that Nike strived to create an online community also proves that the company was not expecting fast and short-term profits from the initiative (Olander, 2008). Instead, Nike has concentrated on building long-term relationships with its consumers.

Consequently, relationship marketing (Brogan & Smith, 2008; Grönroos, 2007; Weber, 2007) plays a major role in social media marketing, since the customer becomes the centre of the communication process. Companies should encourage the creation of a long-term bond with their consumers, and keep in mind that the relationships with them start at the moment they visit a company's website or social media application. Therefore, providing visitors with a reason to come back to the site should be the goal from the very beginning.

The fact that the participants in *The Lost Experience* enjoyed collaborating with each other in order to solve the clues, contributed to the success of the campaign. The initiative required high consumer involvement and communication in order to find all the pieces of the puzzle and make progress in the game. Thus, from a consumer's point of view, social media offers not only the opportunity to engage into dialogue with a company, but it also supports customer-to-customer communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and it offers the possibility of becoming member of a virtual community (Rheingold, 1993; Sicilia & Palazón, 2008).

Consequently, users join social media groups, in which they can contact people with the same specific interests than them, such as photography (Flickr community), motorbikes (Harley-Davidson community), or music (Last.fm community). At the same time, micro-communities are easily found within those social media platforms. Thus, users can join a group of fans of hip-hop music on MySpace, a fashion photography group on Flickr, or a group of vegetarian people on Facebook. With such big variety of choices, it becomes rather impossible to control all the content which is available about a company online.

Based on the definition of relationship marketing provided by Grönroos (2007), as well as the three aforementioned propositions developed, Weber's (2007) model of "New marketing" (see Table 5), and the initial working definition by Jaokar *et al.* (2009)<sup>113</sup>, the authors of the study propose the following definition of social media marketing:

*Social media marketing is any Internet-based initiative, which is conducted by an organisation for marketing purposes, allows users to participate in the creation of the content and facilitates conversation and community formation. Social media marketing focuses on the process of building and maintaining relationships with current and potential customers, as well as any other stakeholder groups on the Internet. Therefore, consumers are made the centre of the marketing communication strategy and continuously involved in a two-way communication process with the organisation.*

#### ***4.2.2. Social media marketing: the connection between postmodern individuals and organisations***

In social media marketing certain postmodern conditions become relevant, such as hyperreality, fragmentation, the reversal of consumption and production, and the juxtaposition of communal and individualistic experiences.<sup>114</sup>

#### **Reality and hyperreality**

Reality is created and constructed by an individual, and is based neither on logical reasoning nor on rationalism. Thus, postmodern human beings form their reality through consumption, which helps them to create their own meanings and truth.

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<sup>113</sup> As it was mentioned previously, the application of social media to marketing purposes of organisations has been named "social media marketing". The initial definition of social media marketing proposed by Jaokar *et al.*, (2009) was: "an interaction with a set of online social media conversations from marketing perspective, based on converged media (since conversations can span both technologies and the media)."

<sup>114</sup> Summarized from (Addis & Podesta, 2005) (Christensen *et al.*, 2005) (Cova, 1996) (Cova & Cova, 2002) (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) (Gergen, 1995) (McCracken, 1986) (Simmons, 2008) (see *section 2.1*).

*The Lost Experience* campaign diminished the line between real and non-real, since its participants were drawn in playing and searching for clues in order to get information about a fictional story, and a real press conference was interrupted by fictional character Rachel Blake. Similarly, the Nike+ community binds people with a hyperreal experience, which is based on the exercise that they practise daily.

Social media provides companies with a platform in which they can construct and present hyperreal experiences to postmodern consumers. Reality and hyperreality blend together on the medium. Additionally, social media allows, “the separation of time and space” (Giddens, 1991). When it comes to symbolism and hyperreality, social media allows postmodern human beings to see themselves through an external lens. Thus, social media acts as a mirror, in front of which users can work on their images. Consequently, in a social media environment, individuals and corporations behave guided by the aspects they want to emphasize and hide about themselves to the “outside world”. At the same time, the online activities carried out would influence the image that others hold about an individual or a company. For example, Dell, Inc. decided to join the platform of social media and launched their blog Direct2Dell<sup>115</sup> in 2006 after having some troubles with their image and customer service (Gillin, 2007).

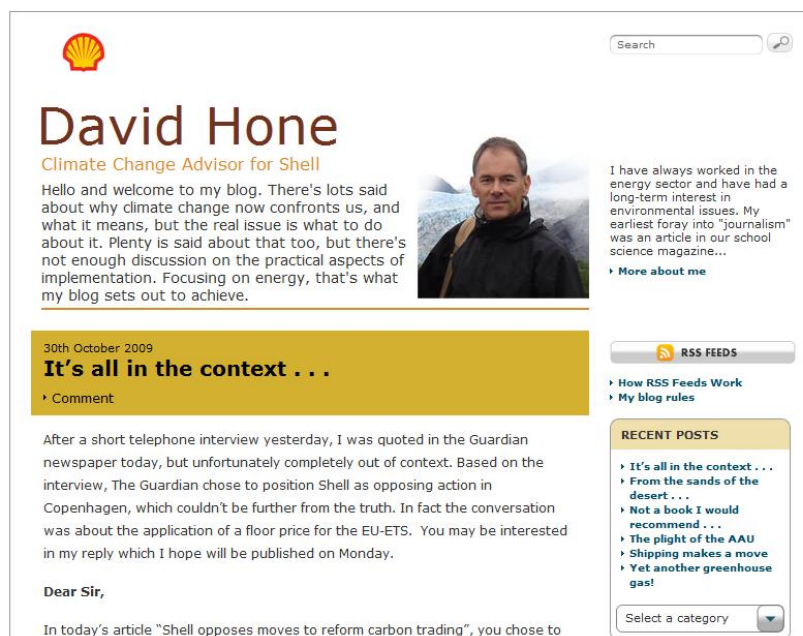
Companies joining and participating actively in the blogosphere (and following “the code of conduct” of the medium<sup>116</sup>) are suggesting to their consumers that they are open and transparent organisations, not afraid of criticism and willing to listen to the opinion of their stakeholders. Additionally, companies can shape their image by stressing certain aspects of themselves and omitting others. For instance, Shell’s Climate change advisor David Hone created a blog which covers issues related to climate change<sup>117</sup> since the company attempts to stress its environmentally friendly intentions (Bryant, 2009). Overall, social media contributes to shape multiple hyperreal images of an organisation with the help of the users.

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<sup>115</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.direct2dell.com/>

<sup>116</sup> See section 2.2.4.1.

<sup>117</sup> Available on URL: <http://blogs.shell.com/climatechange/>



**Image 18: Climate Change Advisor for Shell David Hone's blog**

### **Fragmentation**

Regular categories do not work in postmodern society. The juxtaposition of the opposites is becoming a norm. Apart from holding multiple identities at the same time, postmodern human beings are not loyal to one brand, lifestyle or belief system. Thus, consumption experiences should let differences subsist next to each other.

The Nike+ online platform allows users to engage in standardized activities, such as uploading information from the Nike+ gear and storing the data about their trainings. Furthermore, it also provides participants with the possibility of enjoying highly personalised content. In the Nike+ community, users can create their own profile and befriend with people that have similar preferences regarding sports, training goals and music. Similarly, fragmentation was used as one of the main elements of *The Lost Experience* campaign. ABC employed multimedia actions in order to facilitate and increase involvement of the viewers in the game, as well as the TV show itself.

Social media applications allow users to maintain the multiple “masks” or “identities”, which are so natural for postmodern individuals (Gergen, 1995). In social media applications users are allowed to select the type of information about themselves that will be displayed on their networking profiles, as well as to tailor that information to the purpose of an application. For instance, individuals can demonstrate a more professional side of their personality on LinkedIn, while showing a more

sociable and personal “identity” on Facebook, or expressing their artistic-selves on the Flickr community.

Similarly, through social media companies can also fragment their images, emphasise certain aspects of themselves and omit others. For instance, a bar-restaurant-night club WOO, which is located in Vilnius (Lithuania), has created its profile on Facebook<sup>118</sup> (see Appendix 5). Thus, the firm can network with its customers, and present the communal side of the bar, and emphasise its ‘social’ identity. On WOO’s Facebook profile not only the upcoming events are announced, but also information that could be interesting to their customers. Thus, the statuses are constantly updated, links to videos and articles are uploaded, the pictures from the events are shared, and discussions with its customers are carried out. Apart from Facebook, the bar presents itself more formally on its website<sup>119</sup> and its blog<sup>120</sup> (‘good place to party or lunch’ identity), in which the company provides an event calendar, upload pictures of the venue, and announce its special offers. Microblogging tool Twitter<sup>121</sup> is used to inform the company’s customers about its special menus (‘a place to have lunch’ identity), and social networking website’s MySpace profile<sup>122</sup> to show its ‘musical identity’ and draw attention to the performances that are held in the club. Since WOO is a bar, restaurant and night-club, all these different social media applications can help company to target different types of the audience they want to attract to the bar, and provide the information and ‘identity’ relative to each of them.

### **Consumption and production**

Consumption is a value-producing activity, which is inseparable from marketing and communication. The most important part of consumption starts once the purchasing act has been completed (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; McCracken, 1986), and consumers attach their own meanings to the consumed objects. The power balance between company and consumers has changed. Companies are not able to control the meaning of the goods once it is in the markets, only shape it through advertising and image marketing (McCracken, 1986).

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<sup>118</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=635402404&ref=profile#/BabeRepublic?v=info&ref=ts>

<sup>119</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.woo.lt/index.html>

<sup>120</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.woo.lt/blog/>

<sup>121</sup> Available on URL: <http://twitter.com/WooBarWoo>

<sup>122</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.myspace.com/woobar>



Nike+ sets a good example of how the most important part of consumption process starts only after the purchase is completed: people gather in a virtual community to share and extend their experience with a product, while creating their own meanings for the Nike brand. In the case of *The Lost Experience*, customer's experience comes first as well. The campaign opened new possibilities to engage with the show in a personal manner and create their own reality and version of the organisations in the show in the real life.

Thus, social media proves that the line between consumption and production becomes extremely blurred in postmodernity. As it was mentioned previously, through the use of social media applications postmodern individuals act not only as consumers, but also as producers of content. Wikipedia is probably the best example of how people can create quality content themselves, and become the producers of the information available online. According to the British journal *Nature*, the social encyclopedia is almost as accurate as the well-established Encyclopedia Britannica (BBC News, 2005). "Idea sharing sites" (see *section 2.2.4.2*) such as Dell's IdeaStorm or Starbuck's My Starbucks Idea<sup>123</sup>, are another good example of the blurring line between consumption and production which characterises social media, since users get involved into the product development process and suggest ideas that are later implemented by the companies.

Another example of how consumers become producers in social media platform could be withdrawn from viral marketing strategies, reviewed in *section 2.2.4.5*. First of all, consumers generate WOM, they consume a marketing content, but also a successful viral marketing initiative might lead to the production of consumer generated versions of marketing messages (for example, Cadbury gorilla viral campaign on YouTube).

"Experiment #137"<sup>124</sup> is an example of how companies can lose control over their brand meaning online, and of how users can become active producers of the content. "Experiment #137"<sup>125</sup> is a video in which two friends mix the content of a pack of Mentos candies into a bottle of Diet Coke, causing a fountain of soda to come out of the bottle due to a chemical reaction between the two products (King, 2007). The video spread virally via YouTube, and had been viewed more than 10 million times by October 2009. From a post modern perspective, the video "Experiment #137" is an

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<sup>123</sup> See Appendix 5 for images.

<sup>124</sup> Video is available at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKoB0MHVBvM>

<sup>125</sup> Video is available at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKoB0MHVBvM>

example of consumers' production, which can be referred as value-producing activity. In addition to that, it was an unintentional attempt to shape the brand's image of the two organisations involved, which reacted in a different way towards the clip.



**Image 1: Diet Coke and Mentos candy “Experiment #137”**

According to King (2007), Mentos fully supported the idea and the producers of the video, yet Coca-Cola was not that happy about it at the beginning: “We would hope people want to drink [Diet Coke] more than try experiments with it ... The craziness with Mentos...doesn't fit with the brand personality of Diet Coke” (King, 2007). Nevertheless, the company retracted later, and decided to add the clip to their websites <http://www.coke.com/> and <http://www.cocacola.com/>, as well as sponsored the release of the following videos (King, 2007).

### **Individualism and Community**

As it was mentioned previously, although postmodern consumers are very individualistic, they also have the strong need of belonging to a group of similar people. Consumption therefore works as a means of differentiation from others, but also it is a source to be linked to others, due to the symbolism that consumption objects provide (Cova & Cova, 2002).

As it can be withdrawn from the cases of *The Lost Experience* and Nike+, social media allows companies to address two contradicting individualistic and communal needs of their consumers simultaneously. On the one hand, Nike+ users may become members of the online community in order to satisfy some of their individualistic needs, such as the need to exercise more and keep fit, lose some weight, or prepare for a marathon. On the other hand, Nike+ users accessing to the community, also become members of a worldwide group of runners, which makes their whole running experience more complete. While the users might be still running alone, they are virtually supported and challenged by other members of the community. Similarly, *The Lost Experience* was

an ARG is a game that *individuals* could play online, but that it also required *interaction* and *collaboration* with other players. Thus, users would be involved with the game and compete in order to be the first ones solving the different clues, but at the same time they would also need to join the efforts with others in order to get the full picture of the puzzle.

Social media allows these two opposites, the sense of individualism and sense of belonging to a community, to exist freely, next to each other. Social media applications support the belonging to a community without interfering in the individualistic needs of the postmodern individual. Thus, for example, on MySpace teenagers can express their unique selves by creating the content of their profile<sup>126</sup>, while at the same time they can join any micro-communities within the platform of MySpace, such as a rock-music or a fashion lovers group.

Since consumption and marketing communication take such a substantial place in the life of postmodern individuals, virtual communities are really convenient platforms to satisfy all the additional needs which derive from the process of consumption, such as separating oneself from others that are not using the same product and connecting to the ones that do. According to Shang *et al.* (2006), Internet users who become members of virtual communities circled around the brand “might be motivated by social factors, such as pro-social reasons, rather than by personal considerations” (p. 412).

#### **4.3. Recommendations: How can social media be used as a marketing tool in the context of postmodernity?**

*“Marketers know about consumers, consumers know about marketers, marketers know consumers know about marketers, and consumers know marketers know consumers know about marketers.” (Brown, S.)*

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<sup>126</sup> MySpace allows users to customise the aesthetics of their profile through the selection of the background, colours, music and pictures.

As the previous parts of the discussion have shown, the emergence of social media has highly influenced the way companies communicate with their consumers. The cases of Nike+ and *The Lost Experience* have demonstrated that attaining customers' needs has become more demanding and creative than ever before. Furthermore, the postmodern conditions suggested by Firat & Venkatesh have also implications on how companies can conduct their social media marketing strategies in order to meet the needs of fragmented and contradictory consumers. Nevertheless, the aim of the study is to understand how social media can be used as a marketing tool in postmodernity. Thus, in order to answer this question, the authors of the present study established the definition of social media marketing, pointed out the relation between social media and postmodernity, and explained how the platform can facilitate the communication between companies and postmodern consumers. Then, before applying all the empirical and theoretical findings to the real-life case of Aarhus School of Business, some recommendations for companies are provided as the last part of the discussion. The provided recommendations will focus on the implications of postmodernity to companies' marketing activities, and will include suggestions on how to use social media marketing.

One of the implications of postmodernity to traditional marketing is that it companies need to focus on establishing relationships with their customers (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Cova, 1996; Weber, 2007). The relational part of the communication process is the most significant part in social media marketing (Brogan & Smith, 2008; Weber, 2007; Scott, 2007)<sup>127</sup>. While it is still very important to target the audience with an aligned message, companies should concentrate on establishing relationships with their customers and discuss the perception of their brand message with them. As it can be concluded from the Chapter 2, the online opinion monitoring and participation in social media can help a company to understand its patrons better, generate relevant feedback to its actions, help to shape the reputation, and increase brand awareness (Weber, 2007). Thus, in order to establish and improve the relationship between a company and its stakeholders, a company's marketing communication activities should:

- Become less obvious, and concentrate on providing extra value to its consumers.
- Concentrate on creating a relationship with customers rather than pushing them to purchase more.

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<sup>127</sup> See section 2.2.3.

- Not induce or impel too strong meanings to the brand/product messages, and leave some space for customers to create their own meanings.
- View product consumption as a value creation activity, and think of their consumers as active contributors to the process of product development.
- Be aligned with the rest of their communication activities. However, companies should realise and accept that they are not able to fully control the meaning of the message about their brand. That raises a big issue for them. The level of control imposed by traditional marketing disappears in social media marketing, although organisations should still try not to contradict the core meaning of their brand with the messages they are sending to the audience.

Accordingly, companies should consider the following recommendations in order to implement a social media marketing strategy.

**Before joining the platform of social media:**

- Companies should start with monitoring the online conversations that consumers are having about them. The emergence of social media facilitated the communication between people anywhere around the globe. This means that customers will exchange their opinion about the company online with or without its participation. Therefore, it might be a good idea for organisations to be a part of these conversations. However, companies should pre-define the goals they want to reach before joining the social media platform.
- Organisations should not view social media as another medium for their corporate information placement, but follow and play by the rules of the platform: transparency, honesty, openness to criticism, speed, quality and valuable content.
- Companies should regard customers as producers of the consumption meanings. Reality is not universal, but commonly constructed (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Brown, 1999a). Consequently, social media marketing as well as postmodern marketing (Firat & Dholakia, 2006) are not about reaching customer satisfaction or just “following” their needs. It is about creating, constructing and shaping those needs together with customers.

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**When using social media marketing:**

- Companies should not ‘broadcast’ their messages on a social media platform without paying attention to their consumers’ opinions and needs. Social media marketing is pre-bounded by the unwritten rules and requirements of the medium. Furthermore, postmodern consumers like to be engaged in conversation, and therefore companies should focus on building a two-way communication process with them online.
- Companies should focus on the consumers, and not on their products, as they are the core of the strategy. As Olander (2008) states, “the starting point isn’t for us to figure out how we can know more about you, but, actually, how we can make your run better” (p. ¶7). Thus, the main goal of the social media strategy should not be to increase sales, but understand how a company can provide more value to its customers and establish long-term relationship with them.
- Firms should try to combine more than one social media tool together in one strategy (blogs, social networking websites, podcasts, micro-blogging, and videos), in order to reinforce the scope of the strategy. Additionally, the applications employed should be chosen according to the communication and marketing goals an organisation wants to reach (Gillin, 2008) and considering the characteristics of each social media platform<sup>128</sup>.
- The Internet should be conceived as an ‘umbrella’, under which a number of online and analogue media initiatives should be integrated. As the Nike+ and *The Lost Experience* cases showed, social media marketing actions should be supplemented with cross-media endeavours and offline activities, which are linked to the online initiatives of a company and redirect users to the Internet. This can help companies to engage and involve customers more in their social media campaigns.
- Marketing and communication should be creative, fun, innovative and original. Post-modern consumers are looking for more than a utilitarian value from consumption activities (Firat & Dholakia, 2006). Moreover, consumption and marketing play an important role in the daily lives of the consumers. Therefore, companies should provide them with a reason to be engaged in a communication process with a company.
- Companies should focus on providing additional value to their publics through their social media marketing initiatives. Thus, organisations should create compelling virtual

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<sup>128</sup> See section 2.2.4.

environments in order to attract the customers, and offer to them an experience beyond their purchase action (Firat & Dholakia, 2006; Arnould *et al.*, 2005).

- Social media marketing strategies should encourage the formation of a community around a brand, a company or a product. The sense of belonging to a community should be provided to consumers through the offering of certain values (Sicilia & Palazón, 2008): functional value (practical benefits), social value (connectivity), and entertainment value (enjoyment). Additionally, the communal feeling could be reinforced by including certain tribal elements, such as symbols, passwords, and the development of a communal culture.
- Marketers should encourage customer-to-customer communication as a way to trigger their involvement with a social media marketing initiative. As the case of *The Lost Experience* has shown, a high level of collaboration between users can carry out a high level of engagement with a marketing initiative.
- Given that the juxtaposition of the opposites is a norm for postmodern consumers, companies should not fear the existence of contradictions within their social media strategy. Only allowing certain opposing factors to co-exist in the same context will help to address the complex needs of contradictory postmodern individuals.
- Social media marketing initiatives should allow users to customise the content available and express one or more of their multiple identities in order to have a personalised unique experience.

#### 4.4. ASB case

In this section of the discussion, the theoretical and empirical findings of the study will be applied to a real-life case. First, a small introduction about ASB is provided, in order to enlighten the reader on the key facts about the school and their social media initiatives. Then, the main issues that the school is concerned about and the goals of its social media strategy are discussed. Finally, some recommendations for its social media marketing are suggested.

As it was mentioned previously, ASB case is based on the information gathered from the ASB's websites, data collected from social media applications, and comments attained from an interview

with Nikolaj H. Keldorff, the project manager at ASB Media<sup>129</sup> in the IT department at Aarhus School of Business. Nikolaj Keldorff is responsible for the development of new media and web services for ASB web-television channel (ASB CAST), ASB official website (<http://www.asb.dk>), as well as corporate newsletters. As Keldorff states, his “role is to be the missing link between the Communication department<sup>130</sup> and the Media department, web development<sup>131</sup>, and the IT department” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶ 4).

#### **4.4.1. The overview: Aarhus School of Business**

Aarhus School of Business<sup>132</sup> (Denmark) is a non-profit academic institution, founded in 1939 (Aarhus School of Business, 2009a). The school, which has held an EQUIS<sup>133</sup> accreditation for five years (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b; 2009g; 2009f; EFMD, 2009a), is a part of Aarhus University<sup>134</sup> and, therefore, among the 100 top universities worldwide<sup>135</sup> (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b; Times Higher Education, 2009). In 2008 the school had approximately 8,000 students, 46 professors, 160 part-time lecturers, and 244 researchers (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b; 2009g). ASB aims to become more international, and 26 percent of its students came outside Denmark in 2008 (900 full-time degree, and 400 exchange students from 80 countries worldwide) (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b; 2009g):

*We strive to rank highly as international business school in terms of both research and education. We wish to integrate internationalization in all the activities conducted in ASB* (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b).

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<sup>129</sup> ASB Media is ASB department that provides “the physical frames for the ASB web communication. <.> select and manage the online media that ASB uses ... guide and inspire the employees at ASB in using CMS and other tools for web communication and e-learning.” (Aarhus School of Business, 2009h).

<sup>130</sup> Communication and Development department.

<sup>131</sup> ASB Media.

<sup>132</sup> The official name of the school is *Handelshøjskolen/Aarhus School of Business*, Aarhus University (abbreviated ASB)

<sup>133</sup> EQUIS is the European Quality Improvement System – a management and business administration schools’ accreditation system, which is run by European Foundation of Management Development. There were 115 accredited schools from 44 countries in 2009. (EFMD, 2009b).

<sup>134</sup> Aarhus School of Business merged with Aarhus University in 2007 (Aarhus School of Business, 2009g; Aarhus School of Business, 2006; Aarhus University, 2006).

<sup>135</sup> Aarhus University was ranked as 63rd best university around the world in 2009 (Times Higher Education, 2009).



In spite of that, the primary language of the school remains Danish. Although all the students, researchers and staff have to be able to communicate in English (Aarhus School of Business, 2009d).

The school's mission is as follows:

*Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University contributes added value to society through research, education and dialogue on companies and organisations and their surroundings. Together with the rest of Aarhus University, we develop knowledge, welfare and culture through research and research-based education, dissemination and consulting (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b).*

Furthermore, ASB's vision states:

*ASB wants to be a leading, international business school. ASB wants to develop and transform knowledge and ideas, that creates sustainable growth through innovation for the benefit of students, companies, organisations and society (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b).*

Students at Aarhus School of Business can choose to study a wide variety of programmes in the areas of business languages and corporate communication, business administration, business law, and marketing (Aarhus School of Business, 2009g). The masters programmes at ASB are mostly taught in English, whereas the bachelors are usually in Danish (Aarhus School of Business, 2009f). According to ASB, in 2008 the school's Career Centre had 31 partnerships with business companies (Aarhus School of Business, 2009g), and ASB Alumni network had more than 6,000 former students registered in 2009 (ASB Alumni, 2009c).

ASB has six different academic departments (see Figure 5 for the full structure of ASB): Department of Management, Department of Marketing and Statistics, Department of Business Studies, Department of Language and Business Communication, Department of Business Law, and Department of Economics (Aarhus School of Business, 2009b).

### **ASB's strategy for 2009-2012**

As it was already pointed out in its vision, the main goal of Aarhus School of Business is to become “one of the leading, international business schools”. Thus, during the period of 2006-2009 ASB was mainly concerned about the issues related with the school’s internationalization (Aarhus School of Business, 2009f). Although ASB attempts to keep working on its process of internationalization (Aarhus School of Business, 2009f), the school chose *sustainable growth through innovation* as their field of concern<sup>136</sup> for the next three years (2009-2012), (Aarhus School of Business, 2009e; 2009f; 2009g):

*The global financial crises and the climate changes have developed a new awareness. We are forced to consider and choose solutions that are long-termed and sustainable – economically and socially as well as environmentally. Through the increased focus on sustainable growth through innovation, we will contribute to solving these global issues. Hence, the theme will function as a mindset of our priorities and actions, and as a professional focus for our research and a consistent element in our study programmes and our communication* (Aarhus School of Business, 2009e).

ASB is also concerned about the career possibilities for both Danish and international students, and how “to attract new groups of applicants, more high-quality applicants and applicants who are willing to pay for quality” (p. 7) in their 2009-2012 strategy (Aarhus School of Business, 2009f).

Additionally, the school supports IT as an inseparable part of education (“IT as a competence”), recognises the need to improve the communication between the school and its stakeholders through information and communication technologies:

*...we will increase the level of information vis-à-vis the primary users through the use of new communication channels and digital media. ... By using modern technology, media and digital infrastructure we will continue to create new and advanced forms of integration between the ASB Library, learning and new possibilities and frameworks* (Aarhus School of Business, 2009f, p. 12)

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<sup>136</sup> “For each strategy period up until 2020, we will direct our focus at a particular theme which will take us to the forefront of current development trends and allow us to meet the needs of the business community through interdisciplinary and external research and educational activities with a strong academic foundation within the relevant thematic focus area. The intention is for the theme, during the strategy period, to provide a new outlook and ensure a change in attitude which will take us forward and become an integrated part of our mindset.” (Aarhus School of Business, 2009f, p. 2).

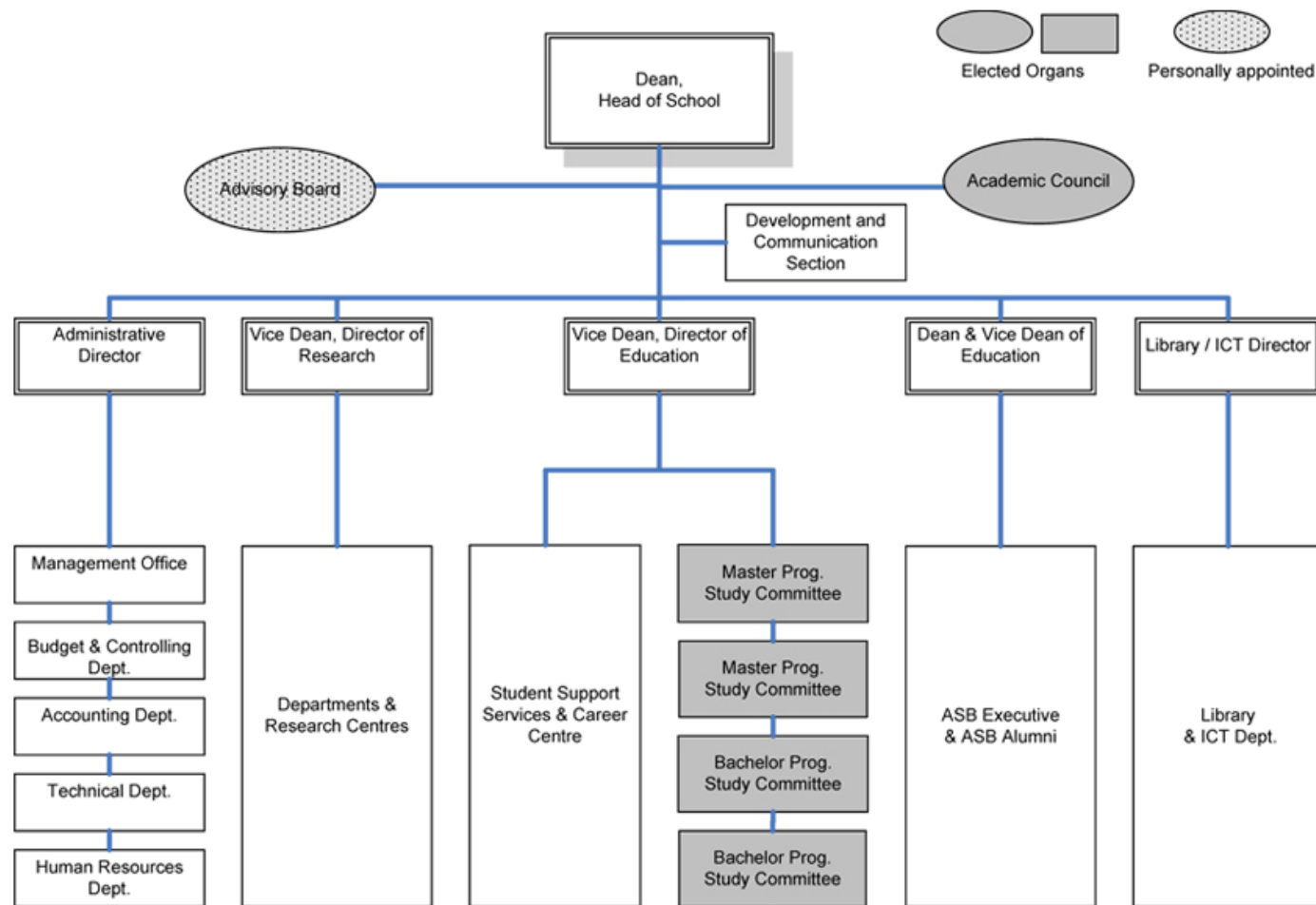


Figure 5: The ASB Organisation (Aarhus School of Business, 2009c)

#### 4.4.2. Aarhus School of business' social media strategy

*“...it's a new world. It's a difficult world to grasp.”* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶15)

*“ASB as an organisation has a lot to learn, and we have to mature in our communication, and in a way of communicating before we will master these new media”* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶56).

When it comes to social media, ASB has implemented a few projects on the medium (see Table 6). As Nikolaj Keldorff, project manager at ASB Media, explains:

*The social media strategy is important because social media is now affecting digital living ... you now have the direct channel for communication with your users and stakeholders. So it would be foolish not to consider, at least, consider to what degree you want to be present in social media* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶20).

#### **Social media strategy**

In November 2009 the school was working on defining its social media strategy:

*With the rise of social media, it has become less and less expensive to communicate and interact with your peers and your stakeholders. ... We<sup>137</sup> are in the middle of creating ... a draft for our social media strategy, which will be an appendix to our communication strategy* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, pp. ¶7,13).

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<sup>137</sup> ASB, Communication and development department and ASB Media department.

**Table 6: ASB social media and other online initiatives**

	Social media application	Description of initiative
<b>Aarhus School of Business</b>	Website	<u><b>ASB website</b></u> <sup>138</sup> . All information about studying, research, achievements, etc. related to Aarhus school of Business (Aarhus School of Business, 2009l)
	Blogs	<u><b>ASB Blogs</b></u> <sup>139</sup> . ASB's blogging platform, that allows users to have a blog which is related to ASB (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009; Aarhus School of Business, 2009m): "At ASB, we simply believe that our students are in the best position to reveal the culture and daily life of ASB. The purpose of this blog is to empower students and provide them with a voice. We believe our students have a high sense of responsibility and are able to demonstrate ethical conduct. Therefore, students are accountable for their own blogs" (Aarhus School of Business, 2009n). In November 2009 there were twenty blogs available on the platform, and four of them were in English. The blog of the International Office at ASB was moved to Facebook in June 2009 (Aarhus School of Business, 2009m; Fisher, 2009).
	YouTube	<u><b>ASB video channel on YouTube</b></u> <sup>140</sup> (channel name: <b>asbvids</b> ): ASB's description of its channel on YouTube states: "The basis for ASB's user-driven video channel is simple: sometimes things are presented better visually" (Aarhus School of Business, 2009i). In November 2009 the channel had seven uploaded videos that had been viewed approximately 7,000. The videos uploaded were a virtual tour around ASB, and six Christmas greetings (in Danish and English). The channel was created in November 2009, and had not been lately updated.
	Facebook	<u><b>ASB group on Facebook</b></u> <sup>141</sup> . The group's self-description on Facebook states: "Those of you who are associated with the Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus (ASB) now have the opportunity to meet on Facebook. This group is a great way to communicate with faculty, staff and other students as well as stay updated on current events. However if you want to stay updated on events related to ASB go to our Facebook 'page'" (Aarhus School of Business, 2009j). In November 2009 the group had approximately 2,800 members. It is a semi-official group (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009), used by the members in order to post information related to ASB, life in Aarhus, events that could interest ASB students, etc. There were no active discussions on the group's webpage in November 2009.

<sup>138</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.asb.dk/><sup>139</sup> Available at URL: <http://weblogs.asb.dk/><sup>140</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/user/asbvids><sup>141</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?v=wall&ref=search&gid=6829736317>

ASB Cast		<b><u>ASB page on Facebook</u></b> <sup>142</sup> . The page to share information, events, pictures, videos related to ASB. The page had around 700 fans by the end of November 2009, although it had not been updated lately. (Aarhus School of Business, 2009k). The fan page was last updated with news in August 2009, and no fans discussions or interactions were present in November 2009.
	Website	<b><u>ASB CAST online platform</u></b> <sup>143</sup> . About ASB CAST: “ASBCAST is the media archive at Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University (ASB). ASBCAST provides the framework for all media productions in research communication and teaching at ASB. The content is primarily research stories, mini-lectures and recordings of event.” (ASB CAST, 2009a). There were 65 videos uploaded on the platform by November 2009. Most of them were in Danish (21 in English). Since the time the first video was uploaded in October 2009, the videos had been viewed almost 16,000 times all together in November 2009. (ASB CAST, 2009a).
	YouTube	<b><u>ASB CAST channel on YouTube</u></b> <sup>144</sup> (channel name <b>asbcast</b> ): On the channel on YouTube users are able to find “videos with the latest research from Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University” (ASB CAST, 2009b). The channel was created in October 2009, and in November 2009 there were 26 videos (3 in English) from ASB CAST online platform uploaded, which had been viewed more than 700 times.
	Facebook	<b><u>ASB CAST page on Facebook</u></b> <sup>145</sup> . The description of the page, “ASBCAST on Facebook. Get insights from the researchers of Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University” (ASB CAST, 2009c). The page is used to upload some pictures from ASB CAST studio, and, mostly, to inform users about the appearance of new videos. ASB CAST page had approximately twenty fans in November 2009 (ASB CAST, 2009c).
	Twitter	<b><u>ASB CAST profile on Twitter</u></b> <sup>146</sup> (user name: <b>asbcast</b> ): It is “instant business knowledge from Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University” (ASB CAST, 2009d). The account counted with 50 followers and 38 <i>tweets</i> about the new uploaded videos on ASB CAST online platform in November 2009. Depending on the language of the uploaded video, tweets were written in Danish or English (ASB CAST, 2009d).
ASB Career Centre	Website	<b><u>ASB Career Centre website</u></b> <sup>147</sup> . All the information about ASB Career Centre for students and business companies: events calendar, video introduction about the centre, information about services provided by it, scholarships, internships, job-bank, competitions, etc (ASB Career Centre, 2009a).

<sup>142</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aarhus-Denmark/Aarhus-School-of-Business-University-of-Aarhus/7428887413?v=wall#/pages/Aarhus-Denmark/Aarhus-School-of-Business-University-of-Aarhus/7428887413>

<sup>143</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.asbcast.dk/>

<sup>144</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/user/asbcast>

<sup>145</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/ASBCAST/106720982568?ref=ts>

<sup>146</sup> Available at URL: <http://twitter.com/asbcast>

<sup>147</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.asb.dk/article.aspx?pid=7188>

ASB Alumni	Facebook	<p><b><u>ASB Practical Help for International Students Attending ASB group on Facebook</u></b><sup>148</sup>.</p> <p>The description of the group: “This is a group created to help international students who are about to begin studying at Aarhus School of Business. It is a form of a support system to help answer questions that you are having difficulty finding the answers for. This can range from anything school, housing, culture, and language-related. It is meant to be an open forum to help ease your transition as well as to help other potential students who may have the same question” (ASB Career Centre, 2009b).</p> <p>The access to the content of the group is limited: only ASB students can join the group, participate in the discussions, and view the information available on the group’s site. The group had around 300 members in November 2009. The members of the group shared the practical information, such as the apartments available for rent in Aarhus. The users of the group were very active on the discussion boards before the official start of the school year at ASB.</p>
		<p><b><u>Career Advice for INTERNATIONAL Students Attending ASB group on Facebook</u></b><sup>149</sup>.</p> <p>The description of the group on Facebook: “This group has been created to help make it easier for international students to find study-relevant jobs while in Denmark. This group is only for international students. It will be updated with relevant information (i.e. - job openings, discussion forums, company events, etc) as it becomes available to us” (ASB Career Centre, 2009c).</p> <p>The access to the content in the group is limited: only ASB students can join the group and view the information available on the site. The group had around 500 members, and had been constantly updated in November 2009.</p>
		<p><b><u>ASB Karrierecenter group on Facebook</u></b><sup>150</sup>.</p> <p>Career advice and related news for ASB students. The main language on the group is Danish. By November, 2009 group had around 250 members. (ASB Career Centre, 2009d)</p>
	Website	<p><b><u>Alumni website</u></b><sup>151</sup> on the main asb.dk website:</p> <p>The reader can find all the main information about ASB Alumni organisation on the website: who they are, how to join, Hall of fame, alumni network Connect, ambassador programme, business articles, etc. (ASB Alumni, 2009a).</p>
	online community	<p><b><u>Alumni’s online community Connect</u></b><sup>152</sup>.</p> <p>ASB Connect is “ASB's alumni online community. Students, faculty, staff and former employees are also invited to join the network” (ASB Alumni, 2009b).</p>

<sup>148</sup> Available at URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?ref=home#/group.php?gid=105017572566&ref=search&sid=635402404.1877019990.1>

<sup>149</sup> Available at URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=55789132068&ref=search&sid=635402404.2271023310.1>

<sup>150</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=26239190634&ref=search&sid=635402404.2271023310.1>

<sup>151</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.asb.dk/portal.aspx?pid=3369>

<sup>152</sup> Available at URL: <http://connect.asb.dk/>

ASB Library		In November 2009, the network had more than 6,000 active members that were connected to each other through the online platform of Connect (ASB Alumni, 2009c). Connect user accounts can be connected with any Facebook account, so that users can share information on both sites simultaneously (ASB Alumni, 2009b).
	Facebook	<b><u>ASB Alumni's group on Facebook</u></b> <sup>153</sup> . "This is a group for alumni from the Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University in Denmark ... Current and former employees are also welcome as members." (ASB Alumni, 2009d). The group, which had more than 1,600 members in November 2009, displayed mainly information about ASB Alumni or the latest information about ASB (ASB Alumni, 2009d).
	YouTube	<b><u>ASB Alumni's channel on YouTube</u></b> <sup>154</sup> (the channel name is asbalumni): The channel has uploaded one video in November 2008 (ASB Alumni, 2009f), in order to introduce "ASByou - an online community for alumni from the Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus" that has been viewed more than 600 times by November, 2009 (ASB Alumni, 2008).
	Webpage	<b><u>ASB Library webpage</u></b> <sup>155</sup> . Users can find all the main information about the library on the webpage, which is build inside the main website of ASB asb.dk (ASB Library, 2009a).
	Facebook	<b><u>ASB Library page on Facebook</u></b> <sup>156</sup> . The Library shares all the relevant information related to the Library on the page, which is updated quite often with the news from the Library (ASB Library, 2009b). The page had approximately 100 fans by November 2009 (ASB Library, 2009b).
Other	Twitter	<b><u>ASB Library profile on Twitter</u></b> <sup>157</sup> (user name: ASBLibrary): "The ASB Library serves Aarhus Business School at Aarhus University. Twittering from here is the Library Twitter Group: Lise, Johhni, Lone, Cilie, Anne, Betina" (ASB Library, 2009c). The Library's profile is followed by 42 users, whereas the Library follows 27 (ASB Library, 2009c). The Library mainly shares the same tweets as its updates on Facebook.
	Facebook	<b><u>ASB Summer University'09 group on Facebook</u></b> <sup>158</sup> <b><u>ASB Buddy Programme'09 group on Facebook</u></b> <sup>159</sup>

<sup>153</sup> Available at URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=635402404&ref=profile#/group.php?gid=13117765362&ref=search&sid=635402404.834426092..1>

<sup>154</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/user/asbalumni>

<sup>155</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.asb.dk/lib>

<sup>156</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aarhus-Denmark/ASB-Library-ASB-Bibliotek/6247007231>

<sup>157</sup> Available at URL: <http://twitter.com/ASBLibrary>

<sup>158</sup> Available at URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=110598887717&ref=search&sid=635402404.2271023310..1>

<sup>159</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=62369262306>



<u>Klubben's<sup>160</sup> group on Facebook<sup>161</sup></u>
<u>Stuenterlauget's group on Facebook<sup>162</sup></u>
<u>Caféen's<sup>163</sup> group on Facebook<sup>164</sup></u>
<u>ASB Fitness' group on Facebook<sup>165</sup></u>

Furthermore, ASB is also concerned about the opinion that its external and internal stakeholders hold about the school and express online, so the action plan on how to respond and monitor the opinion on social media applications is also being implemented at the same time – “...a plan of how we want to interact and be present at the media. And most importantly, how we react and who reacts, if we receive bad press or some kind of rumours about the school” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶17).

According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) and Aarhus School of Business (2009f), ASB's social media strategy has to correspond with the whole strategy of the school (see *section 4.4.1.*). Thus, any online and social media initiative has to: (1) facilitate sustainable growth through innovation; (2) help the school to become even more international; (3) increase awareness about the school internationally; and (4) to become one of the leading business schools around the globe.

### **Goals of ASB social media strategy**

ASB's main stakeholders, whom the school attempts to target through their social media initiatives, are: (1) prospect, current and former students from ASB; (2) employees and lecturers; and (3) external stakeholders, such as other educational institutions and corporations (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), ASB is currently experimenting

<sup>160</sup> Klubben is a bar/club at ASB owned by Studenter Lauget, the largest student organisation in Denmark having more than 3500 members (Stuenter Lauget, 2009a; Stuenter Lauget, 2009b).

<sup>161</sup> Available at URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=635402404&ref=profile#/group.php?gid=12940920599&ref=search&sid=635402404.224422558..1>

<sup>162</sup> Available at URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5505079954&ref=search&sid=635402404.312143039..1#/group.php?v=wall&ref=search&gid=5505079954>

<sup>163</sup> “Caféen is one of the two lunch areas of Studenterlauget. Caféen is situated at the second floor of the M-building” (Stuenter Lauget, 2009c).

<sup>164</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=155614924992&ref=search&sid=635402404.312143039..1>

<sup>165</sup> Available at URL: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=48692349064&ref=search&sid=635402404.312143039..1>

with social media, and trying to gather as much information as possible about its stakeholders and their preferences. Thus, ASB has a clear goal for their communication and marketing activities on any social media platform: to engage in conversation with their stakeholders as a means to achieve their loyalty. As Keldorff states (interview, November 23, 2009), loyalty will provide an extra value to the school - not only as a business school, but also as a brand that has high value for its alumni as well as Danish corporations:

*...with the Internet and social media we have whole new range of possibilities towards interacting and engaging in the conversation with our peers. So our goal is to be able to facilitate conversation and engagement between our stakeholders and the school, and in-between the stakeholders themselves. If we get the conversation going between us and our users, then, first of all, we will have some loyalty from the users. (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶26).*

ASB also aims to find the most efficient way to monitor the “disconnected conversations” about the school (p. ¶20) which are taking place on social media (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) points out that it is crucial to (1) get an understanding of what kind of discussions (positive or negative) are being carried out by the Internet users; (2) be able to take part in those conversations; and (3) answer the questions or the doubts that users may have.

According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), through its social media initiatives the school attempts to provide convenience to their stakeholders (“convenience is a king” (p. ¶67)). Therefore, Aarhus School of Business is focusing mostly on the functional needs of their stakeholders and providing essential information which could be important or interesting to their students through different social media platforms:

*...social media is important for many communicational purposes. Some of it is in towards addressing questions from possible students, and some of it would be interacting with present students and giving them some channels, whether this will be heard by organisation the interaction would be a lot more smooth and convenient. Our post-graduates, the alumni group, would want to keep up with the new research, knowledge from ASB ... So we regard all these media as channels of possible messages and demands of the users. And they are a lot more convenient both for us as an organisation, but also for the users. (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶67)*

### **Challenges for ASB**

Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) mentions that ASB has to face a number of challenges regarding its use of social media. According to him, social media platforms require a new approach to the whole process of communication and marketing carried out by the school. Thus, the corporate presence on the medium is at stake, since the Internet makes the user ‘hold the power’ and decreases ASB’ control over the conversation: “suddenly, one user can give you a great deal of pain towards that presence. So you have to respect that and that is the new way of thinking” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶11).

Consequently, social media has brought another challenge to the school, which is common to any other corporation: the possibility of being openly criticized on one of the platforms (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). Therefore, ASB’s involvement with social media will require the establishments of a new, more open culture: “a lot of our employees are not that accustomed to use this kind of communication” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶32). Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) asserts that ASB has a lot of willingness to participate in the conversations – positive or negative – which are happening online. Nonetheless, this will require “to re-evaluate our culture of being ... for some people and some part of organisation it is a new world that they would be able to – whether they want to or not – to have criticism right in their faces, and the users demand something from them” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶58).

#### **4.4.3. ASB social media initiatives**

ASB selects its social media tools depending on the target audience, as well as the topic which will be communicate or discuss:

*...it’s not so much of the question of whether you choose to consider the medium because of its users, but also could be of what you need to communicate. And I do not think we would settle on either or, but it will be a constant evaluation of what would be the right strategy to distribute or communicate ‘this’ message or ‘this’ topic, how we want to*

*interact with our peers and users, and which medium, which channel would be the best for that* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶24).

As it was indicated in Table 6, ASB and its different departments have been carrying out a number of communication initiatives using different social media tools. However, Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) claims that the school is trying to coordinate those activities, which at the moment come from different divisions and whose control is not centralised:

*A lot of the times, if not all of the times, it is the divisions, which are in direct contact somehow with their users and peers. So they know which channels they would want to use and their users would want them to use. ... I am considering our strategy more as a kind of guideline strategy, and attempt to aggregate our efforts. So they will be able to get help and insights on how to use different media, and not so much about them being controlled by centralised division.* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶69)

According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), in the near future ASB will focus on the following social media initiatives: ASB's presence on Facebook, ASB CAST, the online network ASB Connect, and ASB Alumni. The following paragraphs in this section provide an overview of the main social media initiatives carried out by ASB.

### **ASB Blogs**

The blogging platform, which was launched in 2006, was the first social media initiative carried out by ASB (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). On ASB Blogs all ASB students, lecturers and employees are able to express their opinion openly (Aarhus School of Business, 2009m; 2009n; Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). The key characteristic of ASB Blog's platform is that the bloggers are able to express their views and share their experiences exclusively on issues related to the school (Aarhus School of Business, 2009r; 2009m; 2009n; Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). Although, according to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), the blogging platform is valuable for the school, it has not been that successful:

*It is always difficult to engage users to create in such a platform because they have to feel the need. ... of blogging in the context of ASB experience. And we haven't been able to*

*communicate and to convince a lot of users that, first of all, we have this platform and the possibility of creating a weblog at that platform. But also that they have not been told or engaged into conversation, why they should be blogging on that platform, and not on the other platform somewhere on Blogspot or Wordpress blogging platforms* (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶30).

ASB also implemented some guidelines for its bloggers, who are required to respect copyrights and privacy issues, as well as encouraged to contribute positively to the school with every post (Aarhus School of Business, 2009r).

### **ASB on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter**

As Table 6 has shown, ASB has is present on several social networking sites, such as Facebook. Besides the official or semi-official groups and pages, it is also possible to find “user driven or facilitated groups and pages” on Facebook and LinkedIn (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶30). However, according to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), the school’s presence on Facebook is “sporadic” (p. ¶30), and ASB attempts to reach convergence regarding the use of the different social media channels.

ASB considers Facebook be one of the most efficient channels for interacting with prospect and current students, since the social networking website is so popular between that group of stakeholders (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009); whereas LinkedIn is more relevant for former students: “LinkedIn is the other link with our stakeholders group, and LinkedIn is our channel to approach graduates, alumni” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶22).

### **ASB CAST**

ASB CAST is a web television platform developed by ASB: “ASB CAST is our new answer to how to make educational television and, of course, we consider ASB CAST as a branding initiative. So it is an initiative that it is aimed towards creating a brand value and awareness for all stakeholder levels.” (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶38).

The platform, which was launched in 2008 (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009), is used to upload videos from lectures and presentations that were purposely filmed for ASB CAST (ASB CAST, 2009e; Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009):

*Research stories present the core of the researchers' fields. They focus on issues that are topical and relevant to business and society. The form is short and direct, and we introduce new stories every week in association with ASB's own 315 researchers and a variety of visiting international researchers. ... All material is provided with keywords (Meta tags) and placed in a structure that makes it easy to find relevant topics within the ASB's research areas (ASB CAST, 2009e).*

The platform has a fan page on Facebook, as well as a Twitter account, which are used to alert its users every time that the site is updated with new videos (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009; ASB CAST, 2009d; 2009c).

ASB CAST's target audience are not only the current students at the school, but also external stakeholders, since the initiative is meant to create additional value and shape the brand of ASB (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), the stakeholders outside the school are very satisfied with the initiative.

### **ASB Connect**

ASB Connect is an online network initiated by ASB's Alumni division (ASB Alumni, 2009a; Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), ASB Connect is one of the most successful social media initiatives implemented by ASB.

On ASB Connect, former students at the school are enabled to network between them, although the present students and the employees of the school are also encouraged to join the online community (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009; ASB Alumni, 2009b). Furthermore, Keldorff claims that "the team behind the alumni network Connect is very good at creating the valuable content and interactions between the alumni from ASB" (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶46).

Compared to LinkedIn, ASB Connect can offer added value for its members, since the platform provides the "tools needed to be able to separate your alumni network of ASB" (Keldorff, interview,

November 23, 2009, p. ¶48). Hence, Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) argues that members of Alumni network have a reason to use it: it is easier to manage all the connections that share the same ASB past. Moreover, they can easily engage into conversation with each other, share information relevant to the members of the network, and get the latest news about the business research (ASB Alumni, 2009b).

According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), in order to increase the popularity of ASB Connect, the school has to coordinate their social media activities, so they facilitate conversion of current students into members of the Connect network.

### **ASByou**

ASByou was a failed attempt to create an online community at ASB<sup>166</sup> (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009). ASByou was a social media networking platform, which was developed for ASB students in order to communicate with each other and comment on their daily life at ASB. According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), it was the least successful social media activity carried out at ASB. He explains that ASByou could have been viewed as a competitor to Facebook:

*...you cannot make students create and utilize ASByou just to communicate with other students, and maybe getting some information from the organisation behind because all of the students are already communicating with each other on Facebook. So it was a failure in that sense that there were no strong enough argument to make students to move to ASByou and make ASByou a part of their daily life on social media because it was not considered a valuable alternative to Facebook (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶42).*

### **The future plans**

As it was mentioned previously, the school is planning to strengthen their communication on Facebook. Nevertheless, LinkedIn is also considered to be a really important channel for Aarhus School of Business. According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), social networking

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<sup>166</sup> The platform had been closed and unavailable in November, 2009.

websites Facebook and LinkedIn are the most important “hubs” for ASB, since most of its users are already present on these two channels:

*With Facebook people have been educated on how to be present and how to interact on social media. Thereby, LinkedIn has gained this “second wind”. The level of users present at LinkedIn is constantly rising right now. So LinkedIn will be our “second leg” on our social media presence. ... We will want to be present at all the hubs of media and conversational interaction on the Internet to the extent that we find it to be valuable towards our goals of communication and interaction. And let’s just say that we need to assess whether we have critical mass on these media or not. (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009, p. ¶60).*

#### **4.4.4. Recommendations for ASB social media strategy**

As the previous section has shown, ASB is already highly active when it comes to social media. The school and its departments are involved and have initiated many projects on the platform. The present section provides a discussion on ASB’s social media initiatives, and suggests some recommendations for its future strategy. The recommendations will be focus on the main social media activities carried out by ASB: ASB Blogs, ASB presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, ASB CAST<sup>167</sup>.

When putting down any communication or marketing strategy, key factors such as the target group and the goals of the strategy have to be taken into account (Kotler *et al.*, 2008). These two aspects will act as the main guidelines for the whole marketing and communication strategy. Hence, the recommendations given for the social media marketing strategy of ASB are written and guided in the same notion. Thus, the authors of this study will identify first the target group for the recommendations for the strategy. Then, the goals of the strategy are indicated, followed by the short evaluation and description of ASB’s current initiatives and projects in the social media. Finally, the recommendations for a social media strategy are provided.

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<sup>167</sup> Therefore, the recommendations will be based on those initiatives that are managed by ASB Media at the IT Department of the school, and not on the independent initiatives coming from different divisions of the school.



### **The target audience**

ASB's target audiences can be divided into three different groups: (1) **internal stakeholders**: stakeholders who are important for the school to perform their day-to-day activities – current students, administrative employees, as well as lecturers and researchers.; (2) **associated stakeholders**: stakeholders who at the moment are not directly associated with the school, but can be influenced online by others or have a strong impact on other people's opinion– prospect students and employees, as well as former students and employees; and (3) **external stakeholders**: stakeholders who are important for the school for their well being – such as other educational or governmental institutions, corporate stakeholders, the media, etc.

### **The strategic goals of the social media marketing strategy**

Given ASB's strategy for 2009-2012 and the ideas gathered from the interview with Nikolaj Keldorff, the social media marketing strategy of Aarhus School of Business should be guided by the following objectives:

- Help to communicate and facilitate sustainable growth through innovation;
- Facilitate the internationalization process at the school;
- Increase international awareness of the school;
- Provide assistance and support, while trying to become one of the leading business schools in the world.

The aforementioned social media marketing goals can be achieved and facilitated through: (1) student involvement and engagement into a conversation with the school; (2) ASB's branding initiatives on the platform of social media; (3) encouragement of research and quality of study on social media, (4) the increased focus on social media marketing as a way to substitute (or decrease) traditional marketing; (5) achievement of loyalty from the users and their peers online; and (6) encouragement and facilitation of the internationalization in the school through their social media initiatives.

### **The strengths of the current ASB social media marketing strategy**

In the relation to the social media activities implemented by ASB, the school is on the right track and operating in the medium successfully. The school has already implemented, or have the intention to implement in the future, some of the recommendations suggested for the companies using social media marketing in the *section 4.3.* of this thesis.

The social media marketing strategy is considered to be a part of the main communication strategy of ASB. This indicates that the social media strategy at the school does not risk of becoming a disconnected initiative, but will be strategically integrated into the whole communication and marketing strategy of institution. Although according to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), until the present the school has been only experimenting with social media, the amount of effort and the number of social media projects implemented by ASB indicates that social media will be regarded even more seriously in the future. In addition to that, the information attained during the interview, helps to draw the conclusions that the school has been striving to achieve coherence between different online channels, and trying not to contradict the core meaning of ASB brand, its mission and vision.

Furthermore, when talking about ASB's social media initiatives, Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) stressed the importance of establishing and maintaining the relationship with its stakeholder groups, which is necessary when talking about postmodern and social media marketing ("our goal is to be able to facilitate conversation and engagement between our stakeholders and the school, and in-between the stakeholders themselves" (p. ¶26)). As it was pointed out in the general recommendations provided for companies, it is important to give customers the possibility of interacting with each other (customer-to-customer communication), and the school is willing to provide its stakeholders with a channel for this kind of interaction.

The recommendations have suggested that a company should have clear communicational goals before implementing any social media initiative, try to use a mix of social media tools in the strategy, supplement it with analogue media and, most importantly, not view social media simply as another medium in which to place corporate information. Accordingly, Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) claims that ASB decides which social media tool to use based on the stakeholder group they want to engage in conversation, as well as the topic that will be discussed with them. This suggests that, before diving into the medium, the school started with defining of their objectives. Then, as it was

mentioned previously, ASB employs a combination of different social media tools for different purposes – blogging and micro-blogging, social networking, video-podcasts. Lastly, as Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) points out, ASB is aware of the fact that social media requires a completely new communication paradigm for the school, an understanding of how the medium works, as well as openness and transparency inside of the organisation.

### **The weaknesses of the current social media marketing strategy at ASB**

Despite all the strengths which have been highlighted, as Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) states, ASB has to face a number of challenges that the medium is bringing for them. Hence, before providing some recommendations for the school, it is necessary to get an understanding of the weaknesses of its current strategy<sup>168</sup>.

First, ASB already feels the possible resistance inside of the organisation to become more open, allow external stakeholders to become a part of the school's communication strategy (and even shaping and constructing it together), and get exposed to be criticized publicly. As Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) points out, it will take some time to change this culture while people get use to this new type of participatory communication.

The general recommendations provided suggest companies not to focus exclusively on the utilitarian (or functional) needs of their consumers when interacting with them. However, when asked about the consumers needs that ASB is trying to meet, Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009) indicated convenience as “a number one” need. Although *convenience* is really important to its stakeholders, the school should also try to explore the possible needs of socialization and entertainment that its stakeholders may have<sup>169</sup>. A deep analysis of each social media initiatives carried out by ASB could show that only ASB Career Centre and ASB Alumni are able to provide their peers more than a functional value with the Connect network and Career's centre's groups on Facebook. On the other

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<sup>168</sup> Both mentioned by Nikolaj Keldorff, and observed and indicated by the authors of this thesis.

<sup>169</sup> For instance, it is really easy to socialize and interact with organisational peers on Facebook due to the functionality of the platform; in addition, the users of the platform gather there to interact with each other and stay “connected”.

hand, ASB Blogs and ASB CAST platforms have not been exploited to the fullest yet. Although it is important to bear in mind that ASB CAST has been created recently.

Nevertheless, as it is pointed out by Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), ASB has not been successful in persuading people to use its blogging platform, and the school's presence on Facebook has been not very well organized. Moreover, the other social media applications employed to popularize ASB CAST, such as a fan page on Facebook, a channel on YouTube, and a Twitter account, have not been able to engage users into discussion or conversation with its creators. Thus, the tools have been mainly used for "broadcasting" the video updates on ASB CAST.

Additionally, there is a mismatch between the strategic goals of the school and its current social media actions. According to Keldorff (interview, November 23, 2009), ASB has "to be focused on becoming a lot more internationally acknowledged, and interact in international environment of schools and not so much in local environment of business schools" (p. ¶28). However, most of the initiated projects are focused on providing communication in Danish. Although this is completely natural, due to the school's official language policy (see *section 4.4.1.*), this could stop current and potential foreign students to engage in conversation with the school.

Overall, it can be stated that ASB has got good motivation and starting points to build its social media strategy. Nonetheless, the school should attempt to improve their communication and interaction with the users on the medium, provide extra value to the users, and avoid possible misalignments between their strategic goals and actions.

### **The recommendations for social media marketing strategy**

Aarhus School of Business should take into consideration the following recommendations when implementing its social media marketing strategy:

- Instead of focusing mostly on its role as *information provider*, ASB should interact more with its stakeholders and engage into a two-way conversation with them. Thus, social media marketing should be conceived as a constant online dialogue with different audiences.

- The school attempts to focus on building relationships and achieving user loyalty. Nevertheless, the actions which have been carrying out so far, such as creating a fan page on Facebook for the school or ASB CAST, are not enough. Relationships are created through mutual communication and interaction. Hence, ASB should encourage stakeholder's online initiatives and proactively respond to them when they take place.
- As a result, ASB's communication and marketing activities online should become more proactive, creative, and fun, in order to provide stakeholders with a reason to interact with the school and keep using a platform. At the moment ASB is mostly concentrating on the utilitarian needs on their publics, and on how to provide a convenient information channel for its internal and external stakeholders. However, as the cases of Nike+ and *the Lost* campaigned exemplified, users are more likely to be engaged whether their social and experiential needs are met.
- Consequently, while it is important to set clear communicational goals and select the right social media tools, it should not be forgotten that in social media marketing the consumer – and in the case of ASB, the students and other stakeholders- should become the centre of the strategy. Thus, the whole communication strategy should be reversed, and approached in an outside-in manner. For instance: *How can the school help its peers to become more efficient and organized while studying and preparing for the classes? How can ASB help companies become more sustainable through technology innovation? What can the school offer to post-graduate students, in order to keep in touch with them? How can ASB help alumni to stay informed about the latest research in business communication?*
- The mix of social media tools employed by the school should complement each other and help to reach convergence. Hence, when using different social media platforms the school should remember the different motivational factors that drive users to each site. Thus, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or YouTube users are guided by different goals and needs of interaction. As a result, the communication objectives for these channels should vary as well. For instance, Twitter should be used as a tool to facilitate and maintain a constant dialogue between the followers of the account and the ones who ASB follows. However, ASB CAST account does

not have followed users (see Table 6). Therefore, the school seems to view Twitter as a channel to send out the updates for its stakeholders, but not as a tool to interact with others, obtain feedback on the videos, gather new ideas, etc.

- As the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* case have shown, social media strategies alone are insufficient. ASB should try to use the Internet as an ‘umbrella’, under which online and offline activities can be integrated. Thus, the social media marketing initiatives implemented by ASB could be supplemented with contests, conferences, events or any other creative activities in the school. For instance, the school could encourage people to blog on their platform without ‘forcing’ them into creating a whole new blog on ASB Blogs. The peers could simply share the post that is somehow related to ASB or would be interesting for people at ASB without establishing a blog. In addition, ASB could reinforce blogging by many different initiatives. For example, *holding a conference for bloggers at ASB, where they all could discuss the possibilities of ASB Blog platform or how to encourage people to blog; holding a contest of the best ASB blogger at ASB; or encouraging (or even hiring) a new full-time international student, who just got to Denmark, blog about his or her experience at the school, the city and in country.*
- Despite of the unsuccessful initiative to create the online community around ASB through ASByou, Aarhus School of Business should still aim to form a community online. Thus, ASB could attempt to meet its students’ (as postmodern consumers) need for individualization through the formation of smaller communities around the different activities related to the school. For instance, ASB’s virtual life could be a reflection of the different communities and subcultures that the school comprises. ASB could create a virtual platform, which allowed internal and external communication between the school and its different stakeholders but also supported certain micro-communities (such as Alumni, Caféen<sup>170</sup>, MACC students<sup>171</sup>, etc.). The application could allow users to participate in global and specific forums, share content (pictures, videos), publish practical information, and interact with each other. At the moment,

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<sup>170</sup> Caféen is the café at ASB. Caféen is part of ASB’s Student Union (SL) and run by students.

<sup>171</sup> Master of Arts in Corporate Communication at ASB.

all the social media initiatives related to ASB are spread throughout different applications. A virtual platform could gather all of them together, allowing the users to “subscribe” and “follow” those in which they are interested. The platform could be inspired in successful tools such as iGoogle.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to investigate how social media can be used as a marketing tool in order to communicate with postmodern consumers. Thus, this thesis has been presented as an exploratory study, which attempted to shed some light on the connections between social media and postmodernity from a marketing perspective. Therefore, in order to accomplish the goal of this paper:

- A multiple case study was conducted in order to examine two social media marketing initiatives carried out by two different corporations. The cases selected, the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience*, were analysed according to postmodern marketing and social media marketing theories.
- A theoretical foundation for the relationship between social media marketing and postmodernity was proposed, based on the findings derived from the case studies.
- A number of recommendations were then provided for companies which attempt to use social media marketing in postmodernity.
- A third case analysis was finally conducted in order to apply the recommendations generated from the study of the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* to a 'real case'. Thus, the social media marketing strategy of Aarhus School of Business was analysed in order to provide the academic institution with some suggestions on how to use social media for marketing purposes.

### **Summary**

The present study has contributed to increase the knowledge on the use of social media marketing that companies are undertaking in postmodernity. Thus, for the purpose of this investigation the researchers have reconstructed two successful social media marketing initiatives through the employment of documentary sources. Considered best practice examples, the Nike+ community and *The Lost*



*Experience* constitute two revolutionary and innovative cases, with a global scope, conducted by two big corporations in order to engage consumers.

The case studies conducted have shown that the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* enabled Nike and ABC to cope with some of the main problems that marketers are facing in postmodernity, such as the malfunction of traditional segmentation techniques and the contradictions present in consumers. Thus, the chaos, the confusion and the complexity which characterise postmodern marketing were combated by Nike and ABC through social media marketing initiatives which built relationships with the users; employed a mix of online and analogue media under an Internet umbrella; encouraged the creation of communities; and were founded on solid partnerships with other companies.

Additionally, this study has contributed to expand the academic literature on social media marketing by defining social media marketing and putting forward the following propositions for its theoretical foundation:

*P1: Although in social media marketing the Internet becomes the main channel employed for an organisation's marketing communication activities, the medium is normally complemented with the use of analogue media.*

*P2: In social media marketing companies pursue to establish a dialogue with consumers, who become the core of the communications strategy.*

*P3: The core elements of social media marketing are 1) providing extra value to consumers through engagement in the communication process, and 2) concentrating on building the relationship with a customer.*

Furthermore, the present study has also explored the relationship between social media marketing and the postmodern conditions highlighted by Firat & Venkatesh (1995), and emphasise the relevance of

hyperreality, fragmentation, the reversal of consumption and production, and the juxtaposition of communal and individualistic experiences. Thus, this study concluded that:

- Hyperreality: reality and hyperreality blend together in social media, which provides companies with a platform in which they can construct and present hyperreal experiences to postmodern consumers.
- Fragmentation: social media allows companies to hold different “masks” or “identities” at the same time, emphasise certain aspects of themselves and omit others.
- Reversal of consumption and production: social media provides companies with the possibility of engaging users in a process in which consumption and production are inseparable. Organisations can achieve a higher level of consumer engagement by allowing them to participate in the production of content and in product development process.
- Juxtaposition of opposites: social media applications support both the individualistic and communal needs of postmodern consumers. Consequently, social media is a flexible tool for postmodern marketing, which allows practitioners to carry out both one-to-one and tribal marketing initiatives.

This research employed an “inductive then deductive” reasoning. Thus, the findings generated from the analysis of the case studies and the theoretical foundation proposed for social media marketing were employed to create a number of recommendations for organisations which aim to employ social media as a marketing tool in the postmodern era. The recommendations were later applied to the case of Aarhus School of Business. Therefore, the social media marketing strategy of ASB was analysed, which was mainly based on the data collected through an interview with Nikolaj Høncke Keldorff, project manager at ASB Media. Finally, further recommendations were suggested to the school for its social media marketing and communication strategy in a strategic, tactical and operational level.

## **Findings**

The implications of this study for theory and practice are summarised by the recommendations given, as well as its application to the social media marketing strategy of Aarhus School of Business.

In accordance with the two case studies conducted and the literature reviewed, it has been argued that companies which aim to use social media as a marketing tool in order to communicate with postmodern consumers should (1) consider the **relational** part of the communication process as the most significant part in social media marketing; (2) concentrate on providing **functional**, but also **social** and **entertaining** value to its consumers; and (3) conceive product consumption as a **value creation** activity, and consumers as **active contributors** to its brand meanings. In doing so, a number of recommendations have been advised to be taken into account. Thus, companies should monitor the conversations which are taking place on the cyberspace and not consider the medium a ‘broadcasting channel’ but a platform for dialogue and conversation.

Furthermore, the analysis conducted on the Nike+ community and *The Lost Experience* has shown that social media communication alone may be insufficient. Therefore, this study has proposed to conduct a mix of analogue and Internet-based actions in order to support any social media marketing strategy. Both **offline** and **online** initiatives then become important in order to involve and engage postmodern consumers. Similarly, it is advisable to integrate more than one social media tool into one marketing strategy, although it is important to keep in mind the characteristics of each application and the expectations of its users. Moreover, social media marketing strategies should (1) be as **fun** and **original** as possible in order to complement their utilitarian value and motivate consumers to continue using them; (2) be conceived as a way of expanding **consumers’ experience** after the purchase; (3) allow **customer-to-customer** communication; (4) permit the **customisation** of content; and (5) support, and even take advantage of, the **postmodern conditions** (hyperreality, fragmentation, reversal of production and consumption, juxtaposition of opposites, decentred subject).

Finally, the findings of this study have been applied to the case of ASB in order to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and provide further recommendations to its social media marketing strategy. Thus, the researchers concluded that the school has recognised the importance of social media through the adhesion of a social media strategy to its general communication strategy, and its desire for centralising all the social media initiatives related to ASB. As the interview with Keldorff has shown, the institution is aware of the ability of social media to help establish and maintain relationships with its stakeholder groups, and have already explored a number of social media tools for different purposes. Nevertheless, through its social media initiatives ASB has focused almost exclusively on providing functional value to its stakeholders, while the social and entertaining aspects have been relegated. Additionally, ASB has mainly employed social media as a broadcasting channel, disregarding its role as listener and receiver of information, as well as intermediary between the different stakeholder groups and a facilitator of user-to-user communication.

### **Research agenda**

The authors of this thesis encourage further research on the connection between social media marketing and postmodernity, in order to validate social media as a useful tool for postmodern marketing.

First, further research could be conducted on the subject from a consumer perspective. Thus, through the conduction of interviews and focus groups researchers would be able to contrast the validity of social media as a medium which meets the needs and expectations of postmodern consumers.

Second, research needs to examine and compare the social media marketing strategies carried out by companies within the same industry or sector, in order to find what they have in common and define possible patterns.

Third, in order to corroborate the ability of social media as a marketing communication tool, further research could be conducted on the connection between social media marketing and other approaches to marketing, such as Integrated Marketing Communication. Therefore, an analysis the IMC of various companies could be carried out in order to describe the role of social media in the whole strategy and

investigate whether social media contributes to the centralisation of the information and the alignment of a company's messages despite the challenges brought to the discipline by postmodernity.

Finally, further research could conduct a grounded theory approach in order to validate the findings of the present study and develop the theory generated. Solid theory could emerge from this approach in order to extend or modify the existing theory.

### **Concluding reflections**

Marketing professionals and scholars are witnessing the emergence of social media as a completely new communication tool for directing their marketing messages. This paper has concluded that social media can be used to address postmodern consumers because of its flexibility and intrinsic characteristics. Thus, social media marketing has the potential of becoming a valuable tool for both academicians and practitioners, since it assists in the management of the chaos, change, complexity, and contradiction which characterise postmodern marketing.

The paper has documented the use of two ground-breaking social media strategies; extended the current literature on social media marketing; and offered some recommendations to companies which aim to implement social media marketing strategies in order to communicate with postmodern consumers. Additionally, the findings of this paper have been also applied to the case of a real organisation. The research suggested Aarhus School of Business to provide not only functional, but also social and entertaining values through its social media strategy, as well as change from 'broadcaster' to 'mediator' and 'facilitator' of conversations.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Questions for the Nike interview**

1. Nike has always seemed like a company that would like to fully control all of their communication activities. However, the company is very open to social media and very active in this medium (blogs, YouTube channels, online communities, last.fm groups, viral campaigns, etc.). What has encouraged Nike to move a part of their communications to social media?
2. Was there any fear of criticism? How does the company deal with that? Can you provide any examples?
3. Nike+ has been a very successful initiative. How do you measure the success of it? How successful is it?
4. What kind of consumers did you have in mind when you launched Nike+? Has the picture of them changed now, after three years?
5. What kind of consumers' consumption needs do you think Nike+ is addressing?
6. What do you think is the most important for your customers that are using Nike+ - brand, function of the device, sports, being a part of community, etc.?
7. Nike+ has its channel on YouTube, a Twitter, Last.fm account. However, they haven't been active for few months. Nike+ is also officially not represented on biggest social networking site Facebook. Are there any particular reasons for that? Do you think these channels are not attractive enough, and attract too little people?
8. How much do you focus on advertising Nike+ offline, by using traditional mass communication tools?
9. What about the future of Nike+? Do you have any ideas how to make the community's online experience even better?
10. Does Nike has any plans to continue do something more with social media?
11. How is Nike making decisions about where to invest energy and time in social media?
12. What are some of the common issues large organizations encounter when trying to evaluate and adopt social media technologies?
13. What do you think it will be the newest social media trend one year from now?

## **Appendix 2: Social Media Types**

**Source:** Personal compilation

### **1. Communication**

- **Blogs**

A website that enables an individual user or corporation, the blog owner (blogger), to publish opinions, commentaries news, pictures and videos- in essence to broadcast, without using a big media channel. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject (such as technology, travel, fashion, or politics), while others function as personal online diaries.

A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, Websites, and other media related to its topic. Thus, most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art (artlog), pictures (photoblog), sketches (sketchblog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), and audio (podcasting).

Examples of corporate blogs include [www.direct2dell.com](http://www.direct2dell.com) (Dell), [www.bbc.co.uk/blogs](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs) (BBC), [blogs.sun.com](http://blogs.sun.com) (Sun Microsystems), [fastlane.gmblogs.com](http://fastlane.gmblogs.com) (General Motors), [googleblog.blogspot.com](http://googleblog.blogspot.com) (Google) or [www.benettontalk.com](http://www.benettontalk.com) (Benetton). Some examples of popular personal blogs are: [www.karencheng.com.au](http://www.karencheng.com.au) (a blog on women's lifestyle), [www.chrisbrogan.com](http://www.chrisbrogan.com) (a blog on social media), [zenhabits.net](http://zenhabits.net) (a blog on simple living), [thesartorialist.blogspot.com](http://thesartorialist.blogspot.com) (a blog on fashion)

Users can create blogs on specialized blog hosting services such as Blogger, TypePad, and WordPress, which are specialized forms of content management softwares.

- **Micro-blogs and presence applications**

Social networks combined with small blogs. Micro-blogs distribute online or through mobile phones little bits of information.

Examples: [twitter.com](http://twitter.com) (Twitter), [www.jaiku.com](http://www.jaiku.com) (Jaiku), [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com) (Tumblr), and [www.plurk.com](http://www.plurk.com) (Plurk).

- **Social networks**

Websites that allow users to create their own pages, keep in touch with friends, and build a personal network. Examples of online social networks are [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) (Facebook), [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) (LinkedIn), [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) (MySpace), [hi5.com](http://hi5.com) (Hi5), or [www.bebo.com](http://www.bebo.com) (bebo).



- **Events**

Social calendars for sharing information about events, often in a specific area. Examples of social calendars [upcoming.yahoo.com](http://upcoming.yahoo.com) (Upcoming), [www.zvents.com](http://www.zvents.com) (Zvents), and [www.empressr.com](http://www.empressr.com) (Empressr).

- **Monitoring and Filtering**

Social media aggregators allow users to monitor and organise their subscriptions to RSS feeds from several websites as well as sharing them with others. A news aggregation website is a website where headlines are collected, usually manually, by the website owner. Social media aggregators reduce the time and effort needed to regularly check websites for updates, creating a unique information space or "personal newspaper." Examples of social media are [www.google.es/reader](http://www.google.es/reader) (Google Reader), [www.netvibes.com](http://www.netvibes.com) (Netvibes), or [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com) (Bloglines).

- **Forums and Discussion Groups**

Online areas for discussion, often about specific topics. Examples: [groups.google.com](http://groups.google.com) (Google Groups), [groups.yahoo.com](http://groups.yahoo.com) (Yahoo! Groups), [groups.live.com](http://groups.live.com) (Windows Live Groups).

## **2. Collaboration**

- **Wikis**

Websites, which allow people to add or edit information on them. Wikis enable users to co-create, to collaboratively develop content that often develops into shared knowledge repositories:

[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) (Wikipedia), [pbworks.com](http://pbworks.com) (PBWiki), TWiki, DocuWiki, Google Sites (<http://sites.google.com>), MediaWiki (<http://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki>), Socialtext (<http://www.socialtext.com>)

- **Social bookmarking**

Communities which allow users to organise and share their bookmarked links. Social bookmarking enables users to manage bookmarks—web page locations known as URLs—for sites they wish to remember or share with others. Examples: [delicious.com](http://delicious.com) (Delicious), [www.diigo.com](http://www.diigo.com) (Diigo), and [www.stumbleupon.com](http://www.stumbleupon.com) (StumbleUpon).

- **Social news sites**

Websites that allow users to share links and stories, vote, and comment on them. Examples: digg.com (Digg), www.newsvine.com (Newsvine), www.mixx.com (Mixx), www.hubdub.com (Hubdub), and www.reddit.com (Reddit ).

- **Social productivity and document sharing**

Examples: docs.google.com (Google Docs), www.scribd.com (scribd), and www.docstoc.com (Docstoc).

### **3. Multimedia**

- **Photo sharing**

Applications which provides users with the possibility of managing and sharing pictures. Examples: www.Flickr.com (Flickr), www.smugmug.com (SmugMug), and picasa.google.com (Picasa).

- **Video sharing**

Communities which allow users to organise and share videos. Examples: www.YouTube.com (YouTube), www.vimeo.com (Vimeo), www.dailymotion.com (DailyMotion), and www.viddler.com (Viddler).

- **Live casting**

Live broadcast of user's personal events. (video+ audio). Examples of live casting platforms include: www.blogtv.com (BlogTV), www.justin.tv (Justin.tv), and www.Ustream.tv (Ustream).

- **Podcasting**

Audio and video (digital media) files available through subscription and services like Apple iTunes. Example: www.podcast.net

- **Audio and Music sharing**

Examples: www.imeem.com (imeem), hypem.com (The Hype Machine), www.last.fm (Last.fm), ccmixter.org (ccMixter), spotify.com (Spotify).

## **4. Entertainment**

- **Virtual reality**

Advanced level of social networking that allows users to interact with each other, using avatars (virtual representations of themselves). Examples of virtual reality sites are: [www.SecondLife.com](http://www.SecondLife.com) (Second Life), [thesims.ea.com](http://thesims.ea.com) (The Sims Online), [www.forterrainc.com](http://www.forterrainc.com) (Forterra).

- **Online gaming**

Sites allowing users to play computer games online together and/or compete with each other, such as: [www.worldofwarcraft.com](http://www.worldofwarcraft.com) (World of Warcraft Community Site), [everquest.station.sony.com](http://everquest.station.sony.com) (EverQuest Universe), and [www.ageofconan.com](http://www.ageofconan.com) (Age of Conan).

- **Game sharing**

Sites allowing users to play, download, or share various internet-based games. For example: [www.Miniclip.com](http://www.Miniclip.com) (Miniclip).

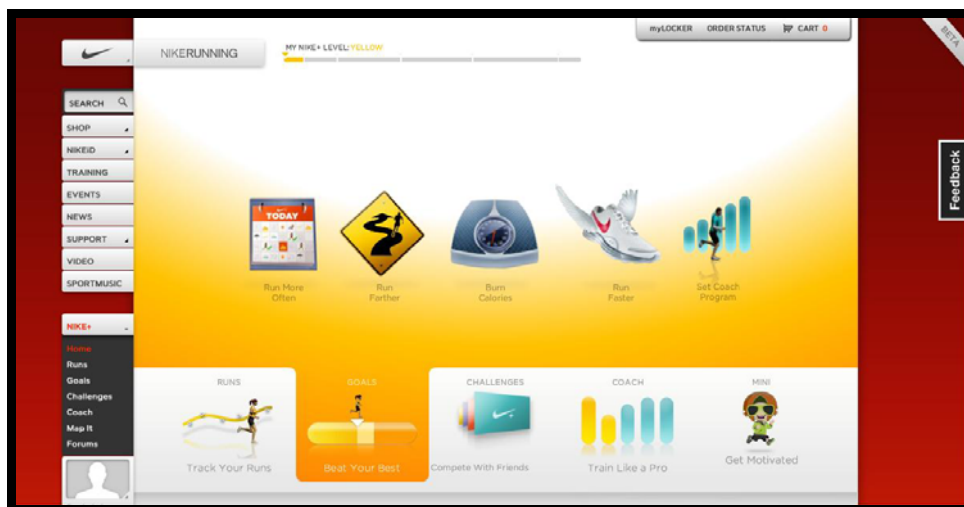
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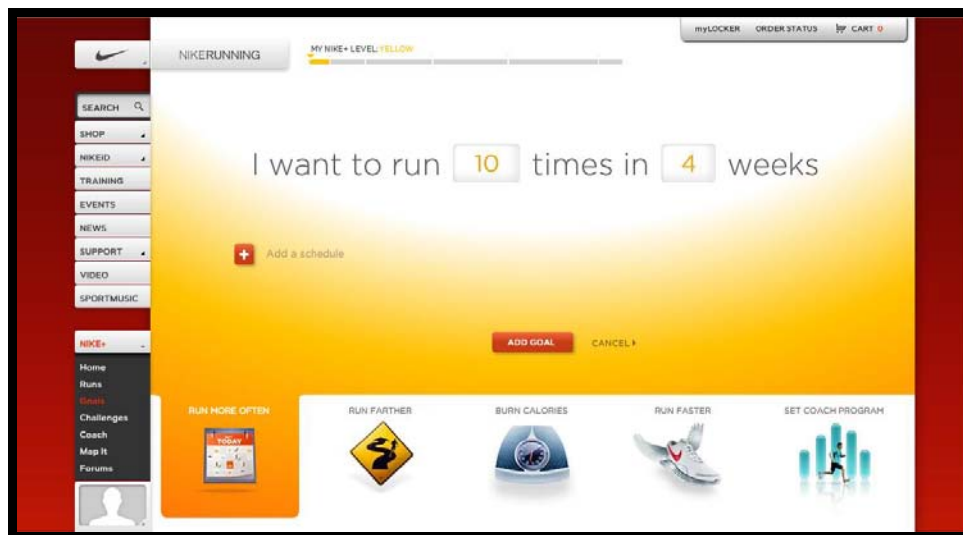
### Appendix 3: Nike-related documents

- 1) Screenshots from Nike+.
- 2) Screenshots from Nike Human Race 2009
- 3) The Lessons of Nike+ They Just Did It: Nike's Social Strategy.
- 4) R/GA video about their project Nike Plus
- 5) Nike, Inc. Press Release (19<sup>th</sup> August, 2009)
- 6) Nike, Inc. Press Release (13 July, 2009)
- 7) Nike, Inc. Press Release (23 May, 2006)
- 8) Nike, Inc. Blog post in Nike Running (30 October, 2009)
- 9) Noone's , Inc. Blog post in Nike Running (6 June, 2008)
- 10) Noone's , Inc. Blog post in Nike Running (17 March, 2009)

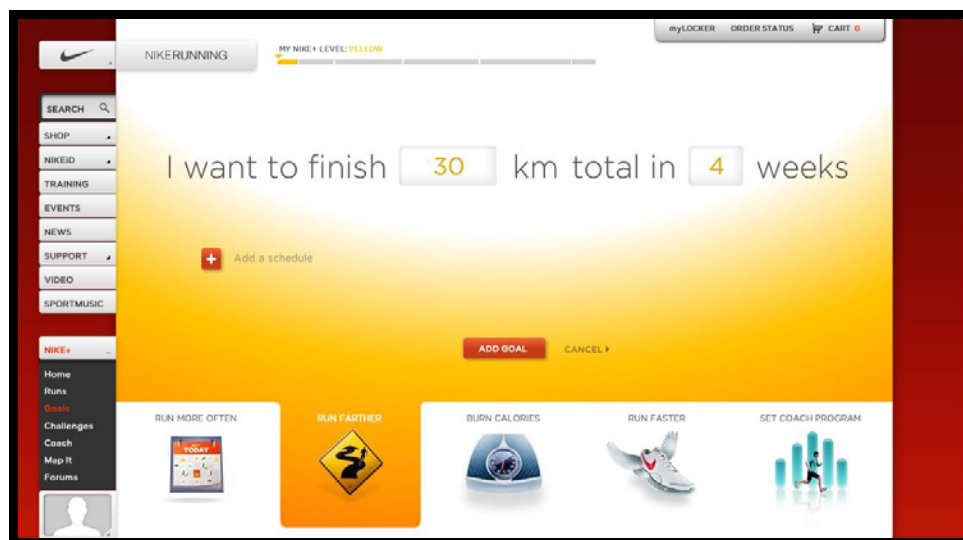
#### 1) Screenshots from Nike+.



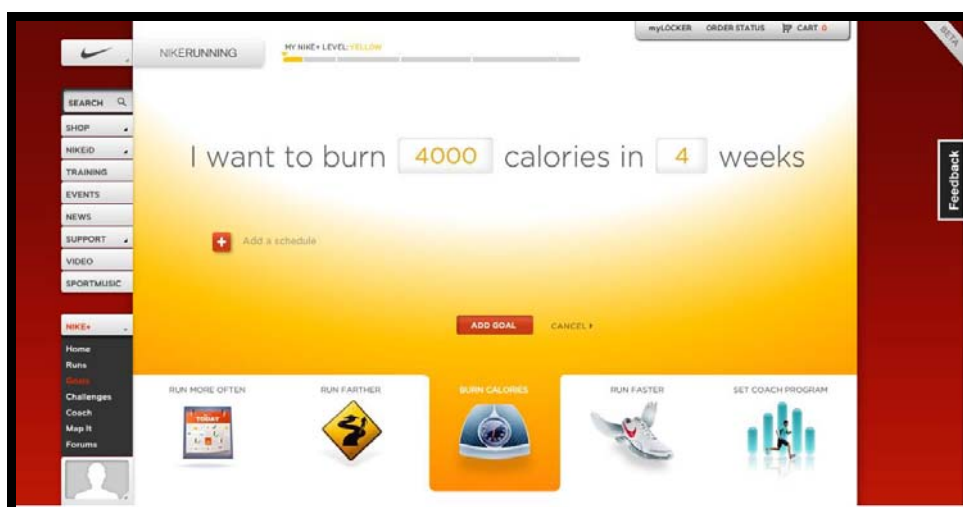
**Nike+ *Beat your best* front page**



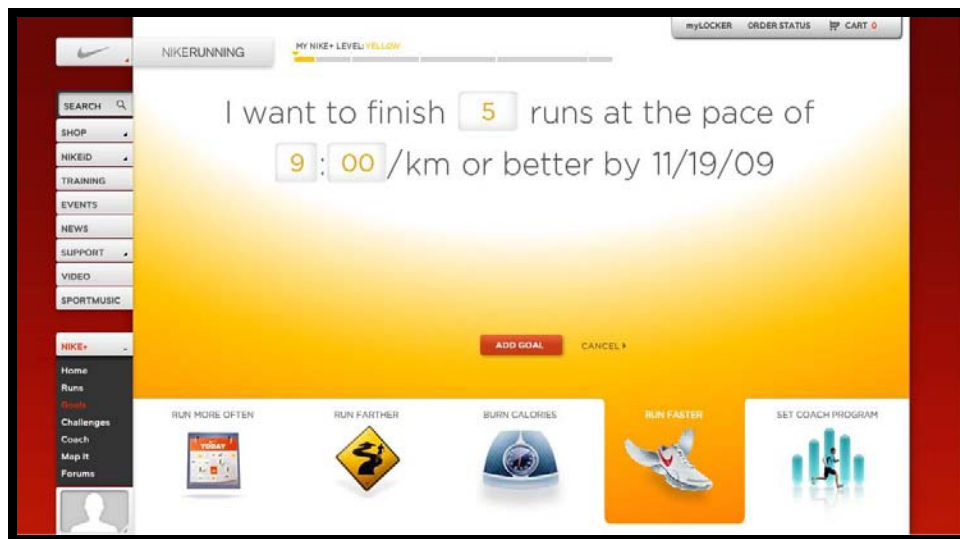
Nike+ *Beat your best* Run more often page.



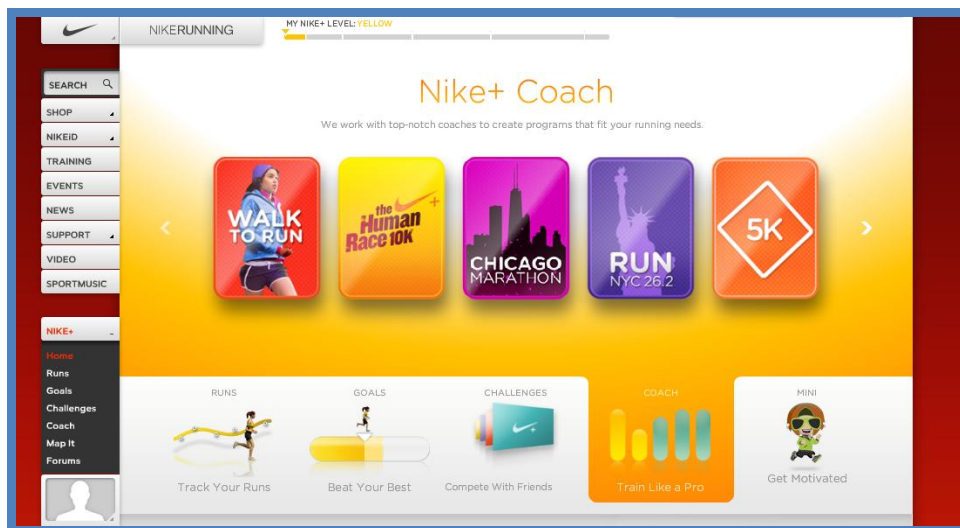
Nike+ *Beat your best*, Run farther page.



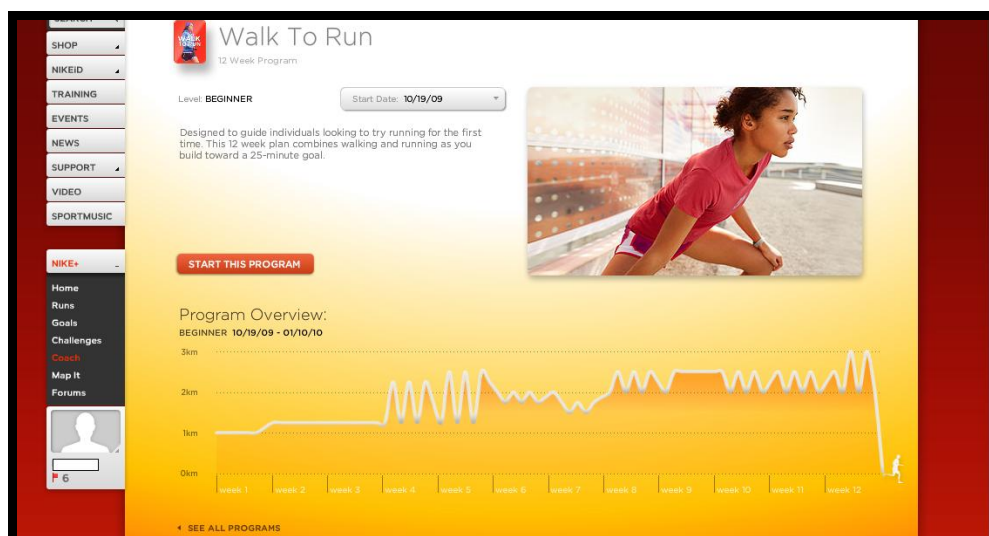
Nike+ *Beat your best*, Burn calories page.



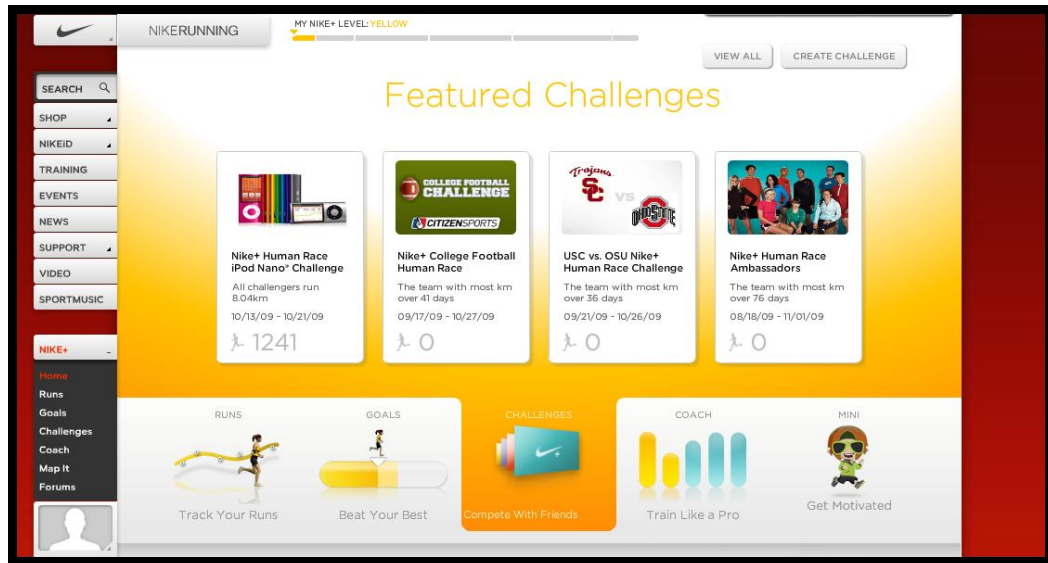
**Nike+ *Beat your best, Run faster* page.**



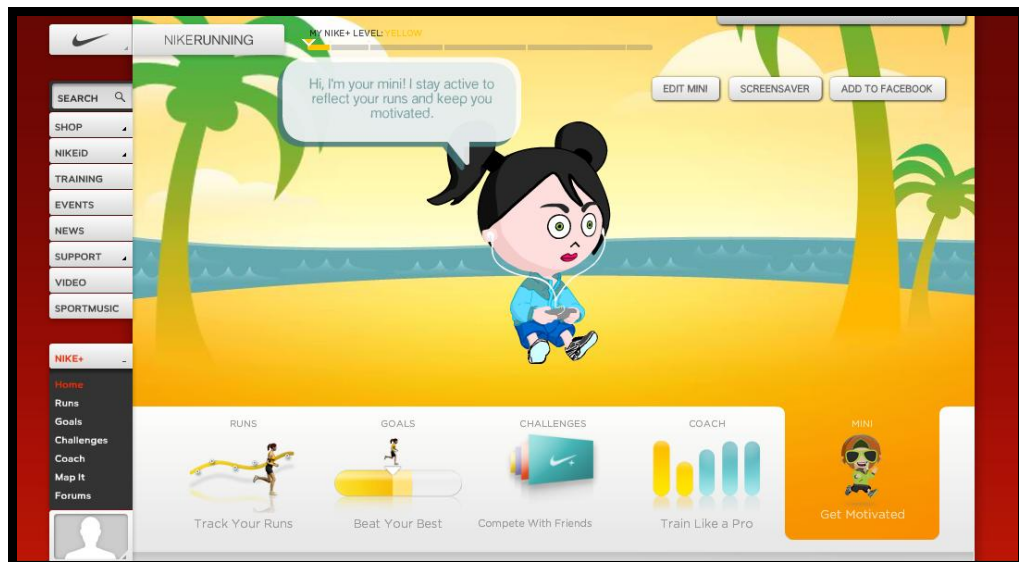
**Nike+ *Beat your best, Set coach programme or Train like a Pro* page.**



## Nike+ *Beat your best, Set coach programme or Train like a Pro, Walk to run page*



## Nike+ *Compete with friends page*



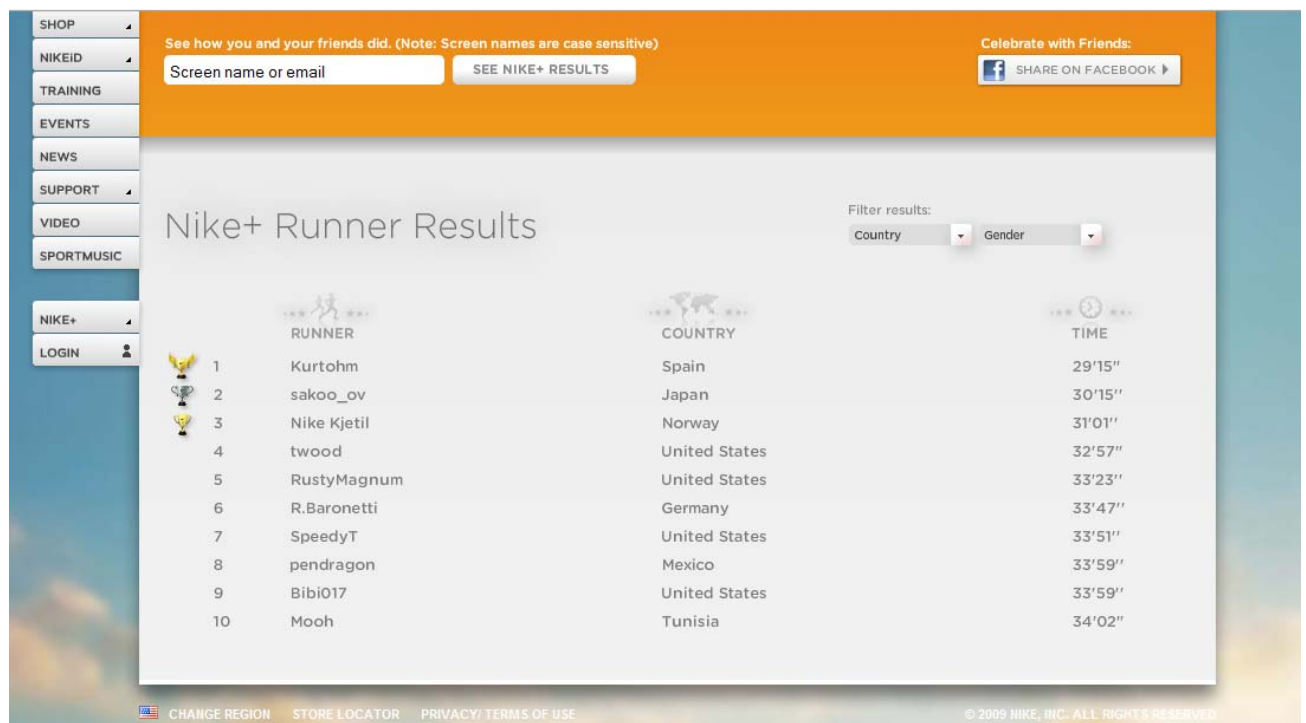
## Nike+ *Get motivated page* (after creating a mini version of the user)



## 2) Screenshots from Nike Human Race 2009



The Human Race 10K front page “Race day”



The Human Race 10K front page “Race day”, Nike+ Runners’ page



Country rank by avg run time		Show me: Country results
All results are in!		
COUNTRY	TIME	
1 Tunisia	34'02"	
2 United States Minor Outl...	41'11"	
3 Lithuania	43'09"	
4 San Marino	43'23"	
5 Reunion	45'26"	
6 Peru	48'07"	
7 Namibia	48'14"	
8 Honduras	48'53"	
9 Uzbekistan	49'05"	
10 Bolivia	49'21"	
11 Iceland	50'06"	
12 Sudan	50'08"	
13 Macao	50'11"	
14 Gibraltar	50'26"	
15 Monaco	50'60"	
16 Kuwait	51'02"	
17 Liechtenstein	51'26"	
18 Ethiopia	52'41"	
19 Russian Federation	52'47"	
20 Estonia	52'53"	

The Human Race 10K front page “Race day”, Country rank page

SHOP
NIKEID
TRAINING
EVENTS
NEWS
SUPPORT
VIDEO
SPORTMUSIC
NIKE+
LOGIN

RECENT POSTS

**The Nike+ Human Race "10K for \$10K" Challenge Winner in NYC**

November 13, 2009  
Community, New York City, Post Race

This fall, the Nike+ Human Race presented a "10K for \$10K" challenge in NYC to excite and energize the running community. ...

[Full Article](#)

Nike+ Human Race 2009

STEPS FOR RACE DAY SUCCESS

**Get the Gear**  
Nike+ helps you find the right gear to track your runs

HUMAN RACE CHALLENGES  
**GET READY FOR RACE**

The Human Race 10K front page “Race day”, blog

### 3) The Lessons of Nike+ They Just Did It: Nike's Social Strategy.

**Document:** Video file

**Title:** The Lessons of Nike+ They Just Did It: Nike's Social Strategy

**Author:** Jay Greene

**Source:** Business Week (<http://www.businessweek.com/>)

**Published:** 5 November, 2008

**Available at:**

<http://www.businessweek.com/mediacenter/video/innovation/61bf06740ddde17bfe9a36394eef79ec721150e3.html>

**Referenced as:** (Olander, 2008)

**Retrieved:** 31 September 2009

#### Transcribed interview:

Jay Greene (JG): *I am Jay Greene, this is Week's CR Live Archive. Here with me is Stefan Olander from Nike to talk about Nike Plus technology. Stefan, let's start with the basics. Tell me about Nike Plus.*

Stefan Olander (SO): It's a system, an experience that we have set up, that actually helps you track how you are doing when you are out for a run. In the way that it has never been done before. So a little sensor in your left shoe pings out a signal with every strike you take. So you get to know all the time how fast you're going, how forth you've gone, how many calories you've burned. There are two ways of actually getting the data. One is through iPod Nano. It feeds you through audio, through your headphones, over your music all the data. Or through our SportBand, which has a little USB connected that receives your data that you then push into the system on Nikeplus.com.

It's a fascinating experience. Once you start using it, you realise that it's really hard to run without it. Once you've gotten used to this instant information – how fast or how long, - one of the most compelling and important things it's not just a data at the time of the run. But the fact that it gives you a currency that you can keep it with you that you keep building. It's like "my energy, my miles are worth something. I can use that to challenge people, to get into set myself goals." And all that makes for much richer experience after the actual run. And once we started making it possible for

Paragraph  
number

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anyone in the community to connect with anyone anywhere in the world, both through their running data, but also through our forums and just talking to people. It opened up the whole new world for this community that was never existent before. So you could do something what you did on a micro-scale with your friends, now you can do that with anyone. And it's really, the great fun is that usually you have people in a lot of different places, now out of the sudden if you set up a challenge with 4, or 5, or 10, or 50 people, every single day you see how you are doing or how they are doing, but you don't have to pick up phones and call each other.

JG: *Has it been successful?*

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SO: Incredibly. We are so happy with the development and with the response from the community. We've learned a lot from the community. I think that it is one of the other things. We have open forums and they have the ability – as the consumers – to come and participate. If there are things that we can improve, which – you know, everything can be always improved, - we get to learn that so fast from our community and get response to it. And, I think, that is a beauty of this like we help each other to get better and that's been tremendous feedback from the group. I mean, we have over 100 million kilometres (68 million miles), I think this is current total accumulated distance covered by this community, which is incredible in terms of that that much running time by a group is absolutely fascinating.

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JG: *What did you learn from Nike Plus so far?*

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SO: I think it needs to be value driven from the perspective of the consumer. So whenever you put out things for any other reason than making it better for them, I think, the response will not be as positive. And, I think, we have been really careful in doing so and really make sure that when we launch a new feature, when we improve something, the starting point isn't for us to figure out how we can know more about you, but, actually, how we can make your run better. And, I think, that balance is really important when you have the community and they're really sensitive to the fact that it is for them and by them.

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JG: *Has Nike Plus helped company to sell more running shoes?*

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SO: Absolutely yes. We've seen grate conversions. So what we do in our continuous surveys is we see the relative market share that we gain from other brands. And it gives us tremendous opportunity if someone is used to running in another brand and they like another brand, once you start using Nike Plus, you have a really good reason to try out Nike's like of shoes. And we like to think that we have, you know, fantastic running shoe like, but a lot of that is what you are used to. So if you someone is used to another brand, the only reason could be communication, now another reason is the community, and you have another reason to try it out. And we have seen great results in terms of increasing our market share through Plus. So for us it was really... even the footwear group said that you have to look at this through longer-term lens, and it's been phenomenal for us to see how that just became a gateway into Nike brand.

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JG: *Can you replicate success of Nike Plus to other categories?*

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SO: I am convinced that the learning we've drawn from what Plus does from behavioural perspective, absolutely we'll be able to use it and replicate this. And I don't think that it necessarily means always using the same technological solution with a chip in your shoe and a receiver, but the insight that you can use digital technology and make sure that both the community angle of it, and all the social interaction, all these layers we can definitely use them in other categories. And we've got couple of things going that points towards that. And we're really excited about that was well. We launched the Ballers Network in basketball, which is taking the social side of things, and that is just scratching the surface of what we can do in that category. I think, every category has something where both the use of data, and the use of social interaction can be used to really create something new that no one else has done before.

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JG: *That's great Stefan. Thanks for talking with me today!*

12

SO: Thank you!

13

#### 4) R/GA video about their project Nike Plus.

**Document:** Video file

**Title:** Nike+ video

**Author:** R/GA

**Source:** R/GA corporate website (<http://www.rga.com/>)

**Published:** 2007

**Available at:** [http://www.rga.com/award/nikeplus\\_video.html](http://www.rga.com/award/nikeplus_video.html)

**Description:** Transcription of a video produced by R/GA about their project with Nike Plus. The present transcript reproduces the main information about Nike Plus, its community, and future plans.

**Referenced as:** (R/GA, 2007b)

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

# Nike+

CLIENT:  
Nike

PROJECT:  
Nike+

Nike+ was born as a multi-channel, multi-sensory marriage of Apple and Nike technologies. We were brought in on the ground floor to create the product's Web experience, and the entire data spec for how Nike running shoes speak to Apple iPod® nanos which sync with iTunes in turn sending your personal workout data to the Web. The toughest creative challenge was establishing and maintaining a sense of simplicity. With a seemingly complex product, we had to create an immediately resonant experience for a broad target market, from geeked-out marathoners to everyday fitness joggers. We had to start with Nike+ music and workout data and open up a world of motivation, competition, connection, and fun—all through the online experience at [nikeplus.com](http://nikeplus.com). Through the combined efforts of our world-class technical and creative talent, we built a robust platform of virtual racing, progress tracking, motivational goals and stories, and global community comparison tools, which take the Nike+ product experience far beyond just a shoe or an iPod. We conceived and executed the visual, architectural, tonal and programmatic standards that defined what Nike+ is...and will become.

[View Project Video >](#)

[View Work >](#)

Capture of the website, where video is uploaded Available at URL: <http://www.rga.com/award/nikeplus.html>

## Nike+ video transcript:

	Paragraph number
<b>The Big Idea [shown on screen]</b>	1
<b>[Voiceover]:</b> Nike was born as a running company. In recent years they were losing their core audience of runners: the competitors were aggressively challenging Nike's dominance in the category. In 2006 we helped Nike to reconnect with its heart and soul. It started with a simple observation. People loved listening to music when they run. That inspired a new product, a new class of experience, a new revolution in marketing and support that appealed to a mass audience of runners, as well as those who never considered running before. When Nike teamed up with Apple they called an R/GA to help create the Nike Plus digital experience.	2
<b>What it is [shown on screen]</b>	3
<b>[Voiceover]:</b> Nike Plus creates a completely new category where the product, the online experience and marketing are inseparable. A sensor in your shoe tracks your running data and transmits it to your iPod.	4
And when you get home and sync your iPod, Nikeplus.com is where it all comes together. Instead of fading into memories, your runs in the real world become meaningful assets in a digital world. You can compare runs, track your progress, set and manage goals, and issue individual or team challenges to other Nike Plus runners around the world.	5
Desktop widgets, scrapable media, an RSS feeds extend the foundation of Nike experience into a fun and active communication platform. To reinforce the Nike Plus community runners use Map It feature to chart their favourite routs and share them with other runners. They connect with and support each other, and form challenges through the global forums. And they use Trash Talk feature to push and provoke one another. Whereas most of initiatives focus on enticing consumer to complete the purchase, Nike Plus continues to engage the consumer long after the transaction has occurred, keeping Nike Plus runners motivated and connected with each other and	6

with a brand.

#### **The community [shown on screen]**

In less than a year Nike Plus runners have ran an outstanding 10 million miles that is 401 times around the Earth.

#### Chicago Challenge [shown on screen]

In the fall Nike Plus runners in Chicago chose to run for the North Side or the South Side.

#### **[Fox News video extract]**

**[News girl]:** “It’s Northsiders versus Southsiders. I’m not talking baseball”

**[Jill Lochman, Soutside team]:** “You can log your miles to either North side or South side. .. And help South side who is now ahead 14 miles at this point.”

#### New Years Challenge [shown on screen]

Our New Year’s resolution brought 50 thousand new members for Nike Plus.

**[Maria Sharapova]:** “Lebron James, I have a New Year’s resolution. I am going to run more miles in January than you. If I don’t beat you Lebron, I will sit behind you in the game and be your water-boy. But if I win, you have to be a ball-boy at my match.”

#### Lance Armstrong Challenge [shown on screen]

In At the dollar for a mile match seven thousand Nike Plus runners in just a matter of days to run 50 thousand miles to raise 50 thousand dollars for Lance Armstrong foundation.

To date every Nike Plus runner has set a personal goal, half of the community is involved in some form of challenge. Over 400 sites carry Nike’s widgets or feature a Nike Plus channel. Runners from every corner of the world have uploaded scraped media from Nikeplus.com to their personal website, their page on their social site or

their blog.

Nike Plus was designed to appeal a wide range of runners. Today people of all ages, of every shape and size, and ability are now Nike Plus runners.

### **The Future [shown on screen]**

Nike Plus is reinventing running as a fun, social, digitally enhanced sports. It has re-established Nike's dominance in the category as countless runners new to a brand has discovered the superior performance of Nike running shoes. And former loyalists around the world are now reconnecting with the brand.

At the same time Nike Plus is revolutionising marketing. Consumers expecting more from a brand than static outbound messaging, and Nike Plus redefines how brand can reach its audience through meaningful personal experiences, two-way communication and innovative technology. Nike Plus sets the standard for the new era wearable network computing devices from phones to watches to sunglasses, to countless other devices.

In the future the Nike Plus platform will continue to evolve and adapt to athletes needs and set the standards for how all brands will eventually live in the digital world. And as Nike Plus community grows, the best is yet to come.

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5) **Nike, Inc. Press Release (19<sup>th</sup> August, 2009)**

**Document:** Press release

**Title:** Nike Announces Global “Nike+ Human Race 2009” the Day the World Runs, Virtually

**Author:** Nike, Inc.

**Source:** <http://www.nikebiz.com/>

**Published:** 19 August, 2009

**Available at:** [http://www.nikebiz.com/media/pr/2009/08/19\\_NikeGlobalHumanRace.html](http://www.nikebiz.com/media/pr/2009/08/19_NikeGlobalHumanRace.html)

**Referenced as:** (Nike, Inc., 2009a)

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Nike Announces Global "Nike+ Human Race 2009" the Day the World Runs, Virtually** [19 August, 2009]

*Runners Around the World Run Together for a 10k Race on October 24, 2009*

**BEAVERTON, Ore. (August 19, 2009)** – Today NIKE, Inc (NKE – NYSE) kicked off registration for the Nike+ Human Race 2009, a 10k worldwide running event back for its second year. With nearly 780,000 participants in its inaugural year, this multi-city event will take place on October 24, 2009 celebrating the sport of running by giving runners everywhere the opportunity to run together.

Nike-hosted Human Race events will be held in more than 24 cities from New York City to Los Angeles, Buenos Aires to Rome. Through Nikeplus.com, however, every city and every road can become a race day course. By combining the virtual running world with the physical, the Nike+ Human Race is open to anyone, anywhere.

Race registration opens August 18 on Nikeplus.com. By registering, runners will be able to participate in one of several Nike-hosted events or choose to run where they are on race day. The “Run Where You Are” option allows runners to run anywhere on race day by using the Nike+ iPod Sport Kit and logging a 10k run that day. Members of Nikeplus.com can also take advantage of online training tools and experience the full depth of the Nike+ community, which already reaches close to 2 million runners worldwide.

In the United States, Nike-hosted Human Race events will take place in New York City at Prospect Park, the University of Southern California, and The Ohio State University campus. Each of these three events will host post race festivities for participants on race day and a portion of race-day fees will go to local non-profit organizations. In addition, dozens of other Nike-organized runs will take place at local event partners and retailers.

Visit Nikeplus.com to register for the Nike+ Human Race as well as find out about the many run locations, charitable details and race festivities.

### **About Nike**

NIKE, Inc. based near Beaverton, Oregon, is the world's leading designer, marketer and distributor of authentic athletic footwear, apparel, equipment and accessories for a wide variety of sports and fitness activities. Wholly owned Nike subsidiaries include Cole Haan Holdings Incorporated, which designs, markets and distributes luxury shoes, handbags, accessories and coats; Converse Inc., which designs, markets and distributes athletic footwear, apparel and accessories; Hurley International LLC, which designs, markets and distributes action sports and youth lifestyle footwear, apparel and accessories; and Umbro Ltd., a leading United Kingdom-based global football (soccer) brand. For more information, visit [www.nikebiz.com](http://www.nikebiz.com).

### **6) Nike, Inc. Press Release (13 July, 2009)**

**Document:** Press release

**Title:** Nike Introduces New Nike+ SportBand and Enhanced Digital Running Destination

**Author:** Nike, Inc.

**Source:** <http://www.nikebiz.com/>

**Published:** 13 July, 2009

**Available at:** [http://www.nikebiz.com/media/pr/2009/07/13\\_SportBand.html](http://www.nikebiz.com/media/pr/2009/07/13_SportBand.html)

**Referenced as:** (Nike, Inc., 2009e)

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

### **Nike Introduces New Nike+ SportBand and Enhanced Digital Running Destination** [13 July, 2009]

*NikePlus.com Merges with NikeRunning.com to Create Ultimate Running Site*

**BEAVERTON, Ore. (July 13, 2009)** – Today NIKE, Inc. introduced the new Nike+ SportBand, giving runners real-time performance feedback on their distance, pace, time and calories burned with just a glance at their wrist. Nike also redefined the online running experience by merging the successful site [nikeplus.com](http://nikeplus.com) and its close to 2 million members together with [nikerunning.com](http://nikerunning.com).

#### **Nike+ SportBand**

The Nike+ SportBand features a new screen with a white background to enhance visibility and a welded seal to improve water resistance. It will be available in grey with an interior pink band, anthracite (dark grey) with a yellow interior band, and black with a red interior band. Runners who enjoy listening to music may continue to hear their run details through the Apple iPod nano, iTouch or iPhone systems. The Nike+ SportBand will be available in the U.S. on July 15, with a suggested retail price of \$59 USD.

“We’re giving runners a seamless, comprehensive, one-stop online destination for all their needs,” said Leslie Lane Global Vice President and General Manager for Nike Running. “From finding the right gear, the latest event details, tracking progress and connecting to friends through Nike+, we’re helping runners hit a new stride.”

### **NikePlus.com**

Nike has merged the popular nikeplus.com website and its close to 2 million members with nikerunning.com to give users a one-stop running destination online. In addition, nikeplus.com has added many new features and social media opportunities including:

**Personalization** – The new navigational system includes a customizable homepage for members providing at-a-glance views of your training, progress in goals and challenges, and your Nike+ Mini. Now runners can personalize every run to illustrate their mood, weather, terrain, route and more.

**Find Your Friends** – Runners will now be able to search for like-minded and similarly-skilled runners, accept new friend requests and initiate challenges in conjunction with their favorite social media platforms. And because no good run should go unpublished, runners can broadcast their own successes beyond Nike+, with automatic updates to Facebook status, Twitter feeds and much more.

**Upgraded Challenges** – Once runners tap into their own personal running network, Nike+ will now recommend challenges from the gallery to help inspire a little healthy competition with other runners who have similar running styles or profiles.

**New Shoe Finder** – This feature asks runners to answer a few simple questions in order to receive a customized shoe recommendation based on the latest shoe technology.

**Improved Goals and Challenges** – In addition to helpful news, training tips, and event details, the newly redesigned site also features new professional coaching programs from some of Nike’s top running coaches and athletes. Runners can choose from a pre-set coaching program, or personalize their own routine and goals with more flexibility.

Lastly, Nike is launching a Nike+ iPhone mobile site to give users access to Nike+ data anywhere.

### **About Nike**

NIKE, Inc. based near Beaverton, Oregon, is the world's leading designer, marketer and distributor of authentic athletic footwear, apparel, equipment and accessories for a wide variety of sports and fitness activities. Wholly owned Nike subsidiaries include Converse Inc., which designs, markets and distributes athletic footwear, apparel and accessories; Cole Haan Holdings Incorporated, which designs, markets and distributes luxury shoes, handbags, accessories and coats; Umbro Ltd., a leading United Kingdom-based global football (soccer) brand; and Hurley International LLC, which designs, markets and distributes action sports and youth lifestyle footwear, apparel and accessories. For more information, visit [www.nikebiz.com](http://www.nikebiz.com).

7) **Nike, Inc. Press Release (23 May, 2006)**

**Document:** Press release

**Title:** Nike and Apple Team Up to Launch Nike + iPod

**Author:** Nike, Inc.

**Source:** <http://www.nikebiz.com/>

**Published:** 23 May, 2006

**Available at:** [http://www.nikebiz.com/media/pr/2006/05/23\\_nikePlus.html](http://www.nikebiz.com/media/pr/2006/05/23_nikePlus.html)

**Referenced as:** (Nike, Inc., 2006)

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Nike and Apple Team Up to Launch Nike + iPod** [23 May, 2006]

*Global collaboration brings the worlds of sports and music together like never before*

**New York (23 May, 2006)** – Nike and Apple® today announced a partnership bringing the worlds of sports and music together like never before with the launch of innovative Nike + iPod products. The first product developed through this partnership is the Nike + iPod Sport Kit, a wireless system that allows Nike+ footwear to talk with your iPod® nano to connect you to the ultimate personal running and workout experience.

Nike CEO Mark Parker and Apple CEO Steve Jobs unveiled Nike + iPod at an event in New York attended by seven-time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong and marathon world record-holder Paula Radcliffe.

“Nike + iPod is a partnership between two iconic, global brands with a shared passion for creating meaningful consumer product experiences through design and innovation,” Parker said. “This is the first result, and Nike + iPod will change the way people run. Nike + iPod creates a better running experience. We see many more such Nike+ innovations in the future.”

"We're working with Nike to take music and sport to a new level," said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. "The result is like having a personal coach or training partner motivating you every step of your workout."

The new Nike+ Air Zoom Moire is the first footwear designed to talk to iPod. Nike plans to make many of its leading footwear styles Nike+ ready, connecting millions of consumers to the Nike + iPod experience. With the Nike+ footwear connected to iPod nano through the Nike + iPod Sport Kit, information on time, distance, calories burned and pace is stored on iPod and displayed on the screen; real-time audible feedback also is provided through headphones. The kit includes an in-shoe sensor and a receiver that attaches to iPod. A new Nike Sport Music section on the iTunes® Music Store and a new nikeplus.com personal service site help maximize the Nike + iPod experience.

Armstrong, who is preparing for his first NY Marathon, said, “If you can incorporate time, distance and calories burned together and make it function for both the fitness runner and the high level athlete, it will take working out to a whole other level.”

“I definitely use music both ways,” Radcliffe said. “I listen to faster music if I am doing a workout in the gym to just get the best out of myself, but I also use it to help me relax in the buildup to a big race.”

Specially designed Nike apparel, including jackets, tops, shorts and an iPod nano armband, bring together the Nike + iPod experience with waterproof pockets that accommodate iPod nano and are designed to make it easy to operate while staying tuned to your music during an active workout.

### **Pricing & Availability**

The Nike + iPod Sport Kit is expected to be available within 60 days for a suggested retail price of \$29 (US) through the Apple Store® ([www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)), Apple’s retail stores, Apple Authorized Resellers as well as Nike.com ([www.nike.com](http://www.nike.com)) Niketown, NikeWomen stores and select retail stores in the US.

The Nike + iPod Sport Kit requires a Nike+ shoe and a iPod nano with Mac® with a USB 2.0 and Mac OS® X version 10.3.9 or later and iTunes 6.0.5; or a Windows PC with a USB 2.0 port and Windows 2000, XP Home or Professional (SP2) and iTunes 6.0.5.

**NIKE, Inc. (NYSE:NKE)** based near Beaverton, Oregon is the world’s leading designer, marketer and distributor of authentic athletic footwear, apparel, equipment and accessories for a wide variety of sports and fitness activities. Wholly owned Nike subsidiaries include Converse Inc., which designs, markets and distributes athletic footwear, apparel and accessories; Bauer NIKE Hockey Inc., a leading designer and distributor of hockey equipment; Cole Haan, which designs, markets, and distributes fine dress and casual shoes and accessories; Hurley International LLC, which designs, markets and distributes action sports and youth lifestyle footwear, apparel and accessories and Exeter Brands Group LLC, which designs and markets athletic footwear and apparel for the value retail channel.

## **8) Nike, Inc. Blog post in Nike Running (30 October, 2009)**

**Document:** Blog post

**Title:** Nike+ Human Race 2009 Inspired Hundreds of Thousand of Runners to Lace Up and Run

**Author:** Nike, Inc.

**Source:** <http://www.nike.com/>

**Published:** 30 October, 2009

**Available at:** [http://inside.nike.com/blogs/nikerunning\\_humanrace-en\\_US/2009/10/30/nike-human-race-2009-inspired-hundreds-of-thousand-of-runners-to-lace-up-and-run](http://inside.nike.com/blogs/nikerunning_humanrace-en_US/2009/10/30/nike-human-race-2009-inspired-hundreds-of-thousand-of-runners-to-lace-up-and-run)

**Retrieved:** 2 November 2009

**Referenced as:** (Nike, Inc., 2009c)

### **Nike+ Human Race 2009 Inspired Hundreds of Thousand of Runners to Lace Up and Run [30 October, 2009]**

On 10.24.2009—The Day The World Ran—Nike hosted the second annual Nike+ Human Race 10K. Hundreds of thousands of runners hit the road as part of the world’s largest one-day running event. Nike+ Human Race events were held in 27 cities globally, from Los Angeles to Seoul and from Tel Aviv to Rome. Thousands more participated in the event by logging their own 10K runs

on race day using their Nike+ Sport Kit or Nike+ Sportband.

The Nike+ Human Race debuted in 2008 with the purpose of celebrating runners and their sport while uniting athletes worldwide through the ultimate running experience. Many of the runners who participated in the race, also trained by using the tools provided at [nikeplus.com](http://nikeplus.com), which has more than 2 million members worldwide. Members of this digital running club have logged more than 175 million miles (almost 281 million kms).

Leading up to race day, close to 140,000 people participated in Nike+ Human Race training runs around the world.

"The Nike+ Human Race continues to inspire and motivate runners worldwide. We look forward to continuing to provide runners with unique and exciting running experiences that will keep them connected with runners all over the world", said Leslie Lane, Nike's VP of Global Running.

Don't forget to check out images from the races around the world on the Nike Running Facebook page.

Congrats to all who ran the 2009 Nike+ Human Race!

#### 9) Noone's , Inc. Blog post in Nike Running (6 June, 2008)

<p><b>Document:</b> Blog post + snapshots <b>Title:</b> Nike + iPod Sport Kit - A Review <b>Author:</b> Noone, V. <b>Source:</b> Roni's Weight: One mom's journey from fat to skinny to healthy <b>Published:</b> 6 June, 2008 <b>Available at:</b> <a href="http://ronisweigh.com/2008/06/nike-ipod-sport-kit-review.html">http://ronisweigh.com/2008/06/nike-ipod-sport-kit-review.html</a> <b>Retrieved:</b> 14 October, 2009 <b>Referenced as:</b> (Noone, 2008)</p>
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#### Nike + iPod Sport Kit - A Review [6 June, 2008]

*Update:* Check out my latest post on the Nike+ and other devises I use when I run<sup>1</sup>.

I'm going to hold off on my journal entry tonight. I'm just not in the mood BUT I had to share my experience with the Apple Nike + iPod Thingamajig (I'm really not sure what to call it, can you tell?)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ronisweigh.com/2009/03/my-running-partner-the-ipodnike.html>

I'll start by saying, IT IS AWESOME! For a stat girl like me I can't wait to start charting all my runs and tracking them. The great thing, is it requires no work on your part besides plugging the iPod in. I was amazed.

Here's how it works.

First, you need an older ipod nano, like these. They are the ones that have the right sized connection. a Nano. I was wrong, you just need a Nano!, sorry.

If you have the right nano you plug in a small device into the iPod. Then you put the little Nike chip in or on your shoe. I don't actually have Nike shoes so I used this shoe pouch and attached it to my laces.

That's it! Now go run!

When you get back, plug the iPod in to sync, it will ask you if you want to save the data and then viola you get a visual of your run, like this...



How COOL is that?!?

Now, I added the blue text to point a couple of things out like the ability to name and describe the run. I also loved the fact I could see where I walked for a few seconds. I just think this is really neat.

I don't know about you, but I find this very motivating. I just want to run so I can get a new little graph! (I'm such a geek)

I know some of you out there have used it, anyone want to share their opinion? Anyone not think it's the coolest gadget ever? Just curious. Honestly, I was quite shocked it was only \$29. It seems like a pretty fair price to me considering the ease of use and cool tracking stats.

OK, gotta run, it's too late, I shouldn't be up. Throwing a party tomorrow, I'll tell you all about it this weekend. :~)

**Update:** Check out my latest post on the Nike+ and other devises I use when I run.

**10) Noone's , Inc. Blog post in Nike Running (17 March, 2009)**

**Document:** Blog post + snapshots  
**Title:** My Running Partner - The iPod/Nike+  
**Author:** Noone, V.  
**Source:** Roni's Weight: One mom's journey from fat to skinny to healthy  
**Published:** 17 March, 2009  
**Available at:** <http://ronisweigh.com/2008/06/nike-ipod-sport-kit-review.html>  
**Retrieved:** 14 October, 2009  
**Referenced as:** (Noone, 2009)

**My Running Partner - The iPod/Nike+ [March 17, 2009]**

Tammy recently sent me this message on Facebook...

Hi Roni! A couple things I wanted to ask you –

You have an iPod right? how are you able to have the screen that says how many miles you did, your pace, etc.? is it something you have to load? what a great way to track progress.

-Tammy

She's not alone, my inbox is full of questions about the little running charts I post with the iPod. So I think it's time to lay it all out there.

WAY back when (holy crap it's been almost a year) I wrote a review about little device called Nike+ iPod Sport Kit. At that time I was only running for a few weeks and recently finished my first 5K. I immediately LOVED the device.

Why?

1. First of all I'm a music whore. I'm one of those people who stayed up for hours and hours when I got my first iPod to "rip" all of my CDs. I love my iPod and I won't run without it anyway. So being able to track with it is a bonus!
2. Second, I'm a stat whore. \*cough\* have you seen my weight progress page? I swear it was on of the reasons I didn't miss a meeting while losing. I really didn't want a whole in my chart! (By the way.. I just noticed I haven't weighed in since JAN! wow time flies—I must go to meeting.)
3. Third, I like to be "in the know" when I'm running I need to know how far I've gone, how much I have left, and so on. Sometimes I don't have to know but I like knowing that I can know if I really



want to know. Know what I mean? :) I really don't understand how people run WITHOUT some device that let's them know. Maybe it's because I don't pre-plan my routes much. I learned to run with the Nike+ so I guess you can say I'm spoiled. I hit a button and a little voice says "You've ran 1.7 miles." or ".6 miles to go." or my FAVORITE "You've just reached your goal of 8 miles." :)

OK, so that's the WHY... Here's the HOW... All my iPod paraphernalia...

#### Apple iPod nano

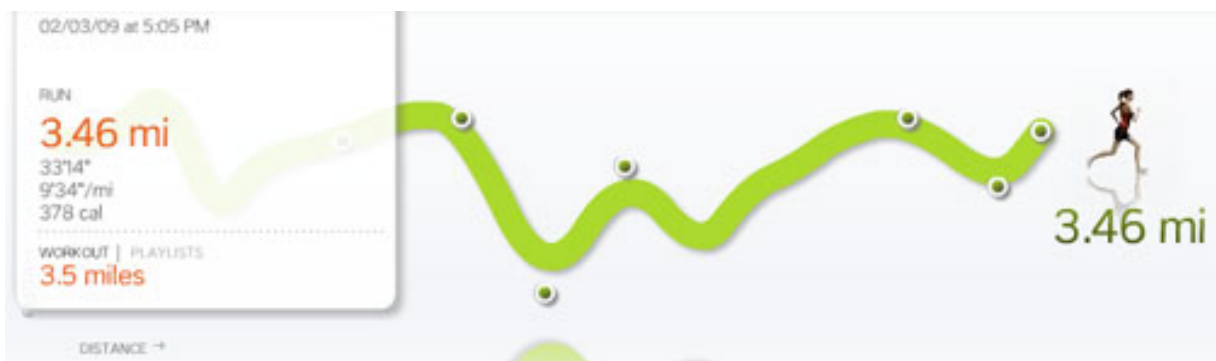
This is my iPod. Notice the color. :) I bought it after the iPod fiasco that happened in the fall.

#### Griffin Arm Band

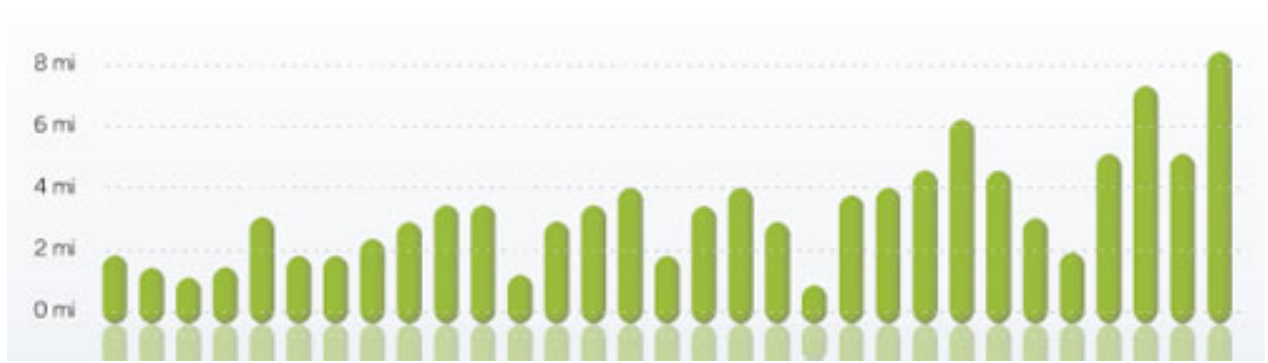
This is the first arm band I've liked. It's comfy. It doesn't fall down or loosen. There's a swivel head so I can turn the face of the iPod to see while I'm running. And it totally beats putting the iPod in my bra strap which is what I used to do. :~P

#### The Nike+ iPod Sports Kit

This is the what puts the running brains into the iPod. It's can't be easier to use. You plug it into the iPod put the tracker in your shoe and start running. I mean seriously. I was shocked at it's simplicity. You can set the distance or times of your runs. It gives audio feedback. Tracks your history, etc. When you sync your iPod after a run iTunes (free) will ask if you want to send the data to the Nike+ website. You say yes and \*tada\* magically there's a chart of your run. Just like this...



Create an account there, join challenges, set goals, create training programs. Really the site has everything you need as a runner. It's not only it's easy. It's FUN! Check out the graph of my runs for the last few months. Talk about visual motivation.



### Shoe Pouch

Finally, the only other piece of equipment I have is the shoe pouch to hold the Nike+. Many people believe you have to buy Nike shoes to use the device. It's simply not true. I have never bought or owned a pair of Nike running shoes and I've been using the Nike+ for almost a year. For 6 bucks you can turn any pair of running shoes into a Nike+ compatible shoe.

That's it! Those 4 things make up the best running partner for me. Honestly, I'm not sure I'd find it as much fun without the Nike+.

And for all the walkers out there.. YES you can use it too. It will track walking. :)

Hope that helps. Let me know if you have any questions.

#### Appendix 4: *Lost*-related documents

- 1) ABC Group Press Release (12 May 2005).
- 2) Transcript from an official ABC podcast (28 March 2006).
- 3) ABC Group Press Release (25 April 2006).
- 4) ABC Group Press Release (15 July 2006).
- 5) Interview with *Lost* Executive produces Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse.
- 6) Transcript of one of *The Hanso Foundation* commercials.
- 7) Links to Rachel Blake's video-posts.
- 8) Rachel Blake interruption of the *Lost* Q&A panel hold in San Diego.
- 9) Transcription of the short documentary about *The Lost Experience* shown in Channel Four.
- 10) Transcript of Rachel Blake's 11<sup>th</sup> video (aka *Sri Lanka* video).
- 11) ABC Group Press Release (20 September 2006).
- 12) Transcript of Rachel's Blake Final Video (aka *Norway Video*).
- 13) The LOST Experience, according to the advertising agency Hi-Res!
- 14) Content of *Lost* Official Website.
- 15) List of some *Lost* fan websites, blogs, and online communities

##### 1) ABC Press Release (12 May 2005)

**Document:** Press release

**Title:** ABC Television and Creation Entertainment bring the official "Lost" fan club and special events to cities around the world

**Author:** Disney ABC Group

**Source:** <http://www.thefutoncritic.com/>

**Published:** 12 May 2005

**Available at:** <http://www.thefutoncritic.com/news.aspx?id=20050512abc01>

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Referenced as:** (Disney ABC Group, 2005)

#### **ABC Television and Creation Entertainment bring the official "Lost" fan club and special events to cities around the world [12 May, 2005]**

ABC Television and Creation Entertainment will be developing the official "Lost" fan club, with special events that will take place in cities around the world for the hit ABC television series from Touchstone Television.

The fan club is due to launch during the summer months, preceded by a roll-out of licensed merchandise to include apparel, photographs, glassware and other collectibles offered at [www.lostfanclub.com](http://www.lostfanclub.com) .

The first official "Lost" fan convention will take place June 11 and 12 at the Hilton Hotel in Burbank, California. Actors and producers from the series will be on hand to speak to attendees, who are affectionately known as "Losties." The convention tour plans five additional stops in the next year.

"'Lost' has a tremendous fan following, and it is time we gave back to the fans. Creation Entertainment is an innovator in answering the needs of fans, and they are the perfect partner," said Bruce Gersh, senior vice president, Business Development for ABC Entertainment.

Creation Entertainment's vice president of Licensing, Erin Ferries, said: "Over the past 34 years, our company has been deeply involved in virtually every genre franchise property. 'Lost' executive producers, J.J. Abrams and Damon Lindelof and their team have created intriguing characters and storylines that have quickly developed a huge following. We're proud to be associated with 'Lost,' and look forward to developing innovative products and events for fans of the series."

Established in 1971, Creation Entertainment continues a 34-year tradition of producing the world's leading conventions for fans of genre television and films. Creation has organized over 2,300 events in major cities throughout the globe. An early innovator of marketing and merchandising to the fan market, Creation manufactures studio licensed apparel, glassware and collectibles.

"Lost" stars Naveen Andrews as Sayid, Emilie de Ravin as Claire, Matthew Fox as Jack, Jorge Garcia as Hurley, Maggie Grace as Shannon, Josh Holloway as Sawyer, Malcolm David Kelley as Walt, Daniel Dae Kim as Jin, Yunjin Kim as Sun, Evangeline Lilly as Kate, Dominic Monaghan as Charlie, Terry O'Quinn as Locke, Harold Perrineau as Michael and Ian Somerhalder as Boone.

J.J. Abrams, Damon Lindelof, Bryan Burk, Carlton Cuse and Jack Bender serve as executive producers. "Lost," which is filmed entirely on location in Hawaii, is from Touchstone Television. The series airs on the ABC Television Network Wednesdays from 8:00-9:00 p.m., ET.

## 2) Transcript from an official ABC podcast (28 March 2006).

**Document:** Audio file  
**Title:** Lost Official Podcast  
**Author:** ABC Entertainment  
**Source:** ABC's Lost show official website  
**Published:** 28 March 2006  
**Available at:** <http://abc.go.com/shows/lost>; also on Lostpedia  
[http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Portal:Official\\_Lost\\_Podcast](http://lostpedia.wikia.com/wiki/Portal:Official_Lost_Podcast)  
**Description:** Transcription of a fragment of the podcast. The present transcript reproduces a conversation between Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindelof, Executive Producers of Lost.  
**Fragment:** Transcription of the fragment 00:23:20 to 00:24:45  
**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009  
**Referenced as:** (ABC Entertainment, 2006)

### Transcription of a fragment of the podcast:

	Paragraph number
<b>“Carlton Cuse:</b> ...The Hanso Foundation website is down for remodelling and when it comes back it's going to be awesome. In fact, we're guys going to let you know a secret. We're involved in a project which is going to involve the Internet, it's going to start in May...	1
<b>Damon Lindelof:</b> ...In May. But you're gonna have to watch the show...hmm...and not just the show, but what happens in between the show.	2
<b>Carlton Cuse:</b> ...between the acts of the show....	3
<b>Damon Lindelof:</b> ...so watch it very carefully in order to begin the sort of the path on this, what we're calling an experience	4
<b>Carlton Cuse:</b> Yeah, and this Internet experience will be actually launched during one of the shows in May, and it'll be a path that will lead to a lot of information about the show that we aren't going to get you in the show, but it's sort of an answer very..	5
<b>Damon Lindelof:</b> it's not behind the scenes stuff either... it's kind of cool	6

storytelling.

**Carlton Cuse:** Yeah, which hopefully it's gonna, in some degree, satisfy the desire for new material on *Lost* during the summer. I mean, you know, during that period of time, when the show is down before we start the next season we're actually going to be telling some *Lost* stories.

**Damon Lindelof:** And since you are, you know, listening to this podcast and taking your time for listening to all this insanity and stupid jokes, we'll let you know that we're doing this, but once it starts we're going to completely deny having any involvement with it whatsoever."

### 3) ABC Group Press Release (25 April 2006)

**Document:** Press release

**Title:** ABC Television Network, United Kingdom's Channel 4 and Australia's Seven Network to launch global interactive "Lost Experience"

**Author:** Disney ABC Group

**Source:** Disney ABC Group Press Releases

**Published:** 25 April 2006

**Available at:** [http://www.disneyabctv.com/web/NewsRelease/DispDNR.aspx?id=042506\\_01](http://www.disneyabctv.com/web/NewsRelease/DispDNR.aspx?id=042506_01)

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Referenced as:** (Disney ABC Group, 2006a)

### **ABC Television Network, United Kingdom's Channel 4 and Australia's Seven Network to launch global interactive "Lost Experience" [24 April, 2006]**

*In a Unique Marketing Initiative, People Around the Globe Must Unite to Solve a Great Mystery, Based on the International Hit TV Show "Lost"*

ABC, Channel 4 Television in the UK and Australia's Seven Network today announced the "Lost Experience," a revolutionary interactive marketing endeavor based on the international hit television series, "Lost," which is designed to further enhance viewers' relationship with the program. The "Lost Experience" incorporates over twenty broadcasters from five continents, making it the largest global interactive challenge based on a television series.

"Cutting edge technology has vaulted us into a new era; audiences are demanding greater depth of content and more creative ways of storytelling," said Steve McPherson, president, ABC

Entertainment. "The 'Lost Experience's' innovative, interactive platform connects with global audiences by delivering both great content and superb storytelling."

As part of the unique marketing initiative, the "Lost Experience" will follow a parallel storyline not featured in the television broadcast and is designed so that both fans of the series and those unfamiliar with the show can participate. The experience provides insight to unlock some of the island's secrets for those savvy enough to collect the clues, make the connections and find the answers. Clues will first appear during broadcasts on May 2nd in the UK, May 3rd in the U.S. and May 4th in Australia. Although the "Lost Experience" is primarily internet-based, participants should not assume that clues will be limited to the online world. Any and every platform has the potential to contain hidden secrets of the mystery. Given the different broadcast windows around the world, this challenge is specifically designed in a manner that is not dependent on information specific to either Season One or Season Two, allowing for the participation of those who have not yet seen either season of "Lost."

"The 'Lost Experience' gives the mystery, intrigue, twist and turns that 'Lost' provides as a television series," said Mike Benson, senior vice president, Marketing, ABC Entertainment. "With 'Lost' being the global phenomenon that it is, our partnership with the United Kingdom's Channel 4 and Australia's Seven Network adds worldwide challenges for participants that require ingenuity and tenacity on their part. It's like a giant, mysterious jigsaw puzzle that will come to life for all the world to solve, whether you are a fan of the TV series, or not."

Tracy Blacher, head of New Media Marketing at Channel 4, said: "We wanted to find a way of allowing 'Lost' viewers to engage with Season Two in a genuinely innovative and creative way. We're delighted to be working with ABC and Australia's Seven Network to develop a truly groundbreaking experience that reflects the international nature of 'Lost's' huge fan base."

"We are very proud to be a part of this innovative global campaign for 'Lost,'" said Tim Worner, director of Programming and Production for Channel Seven. "This is a real treat for 'Lost' viewers in Australia - this additional form of storytelling is part of the future of great TV drama and we are thrilled to be onboard. Seven aims to challenge convention in thinking about the future, and this additional experience for 'Lost' viewers is right in line with how we feel -- it's exciting to be part of a team that is breaking new ground."

### **About "Lost"**

After Oceanic Air flight 815 tore apart in mid-air and crashed on a seemingly deserted Pacific island, its survivors were forced to find inner strength they never knew they had in order to survive. The band of friends, family, enemies and strangers have become reluctant heroes who must work together against the cruel weather and harsh terrain if they want to stay alive. Danger and mystery

loom behind every corner on the island, and those they thought could be trusted may turn against them. Even heroes have secrets.

"Lost" stars Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje as Mr. Eko, Naveen Andrews as Sayid, Emilie de Ravin as Claire, Matthew Fox as Jack, Jorge Garcia as Hurley, Josh Holloway as Sawyer, Daniel Dae Kim as Jin, Yunjin Kim as Sun, Evangeline Lilly as Kate, Dominic Monaghan as Charlie, Terry O'Quinn as Locke, Harold Perrineau as Michael, Michelle Rodriguez as Ana Lucia and Cynthia Watros as Libby.

"Lost" was created by Jeffrey Lieber and J.J. Abrams & Damon Lindelof. Abrams, Lindelof, Bryan Burk, Jack Bender and Carlton Cuse serve as executive producers. "Lost," which is filmed entirely on location in Hawaii, is from Touchstone Television.

"Lost" is the fastest-selling TV series in Buena Vista International Television's (BVITV) history, having been licensed in over 210 territories worldwide. Across countries such as Australia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Singapore, Sweden, the UK and Russia, "Lost" has consistently been No. 1 in its timeslot. In the UK, "Lost" delivered Channel 4's biggest-ever audience for a U.S. series launch, and on Seven Australia it was consistently one of the top two series on the network and held the second-biggest premiere in Australia's television history. The series has been a Top 3 U.S. series on free TV channels in every international territory it has aired.

### **About ABC**

ABC Entertainment offers quality, award-winning programming that includes many of the most widely viewed series, specials and movies. Primetime Entertainment on ABC crosses various programming genres with hit series like "Desperate Housewives," "Lost," "Grey's Anatomy," "Extreme Home Makeover: Home Edition," "Boston Legal," "According to Jim," "George Lopez," "Freddie," "Dancing with the Stars," "America's Funniest Home Videos," "Super Nanny" and "Wife Swap." In Late-Night, "Jimmy Kimmel Live" celebrated its third anniversary in January 2006. ABC Entertainment is part of the ABC Television Network and is managed by Disney-ABC Television Group, a division of The Walt Disney Company.

### **About Channel Four Television**

The Channel Four Television Corporation is a publicly-owned, not-for-profit broadcaster operating in the UK. Its main public service channel, Channel 4, is a free-to-air service funded entirely by advertising and sponsorship. Unlike the BBC, we do not receive license fee funds. Channel 4 also operates a number of other services, including the free-to-air digital TV channels E4 and More4, the subscription service FilmFour (which will be relaunched as a free-to-air channel in summer 2006),



and an ever-growing range of online activities at channel4.com, including the broadband service FourDocs. The FilmFour production division produces and co-produces feature films for the UK and global markets.

### **About Seven Network Limited**

Seven is recognized as one of Australia's leading media companies. Our television programming reaches more than nine in ten Australians every week - with such hit local productions as "Dancing with the Stars" and drama series "Home and Away" and "All Saints," as well as blockbuster U.S. series "Lost," "Desperate Housewives," "Grey's Anatomy" and "Commander In Chief." Our magazines business publishes one in four magazines read by Australians. We publish two of the three most widely-read magazines in Australia. Seven is recognized as the leader in news and public affairs, Australian-produced drama and sports programming - our reputation being built on a commitment to produce and deliver programming relevant to Australians. Seven's planning for the future is built on the knowledge that television will continue to dominate communications - as the gateway for audiences through "traditional" television programming and the integration of internet and other online and broadband viewing options through Seven's new partnership with Yahoo! Inc to create Yahoo!7 in Australia.

#### **4) ABC Group Press Release (15 July 2006)**

**Document:** Press release

**Title:** 4 8 15 16 23 42 Global interactive phenomenon, Lost Experience, to reveal meaning behind mysterious numbers on international hit TV show "Lost"

**Author:** Disney ABC Group

**Source:** Disney ABC Group Press Releases

**Published:** 15 July 2006

**Available at:** [http://www.disneyabctv.com/web/NewsRelease/DispDNR.aspx?id=072506\\_12](http://www.disneyabctv.com/web/NewsRelease/DispDNR.aspx?id=072506_12)

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Referenced as:** (Disney ABC Group, 2006b)

**4 8 15 16 23 42 Global interactive phenomenon, Lost Experience, to reveal meaning behind mysterious numbers on international hit TV show "Lost" [15 July, 2006]**

*Multiple Clues on Several Continents Needed to Solve the Puzzle*

As promised, the alternate reality game Lost Experience continues to divulge answers related to mysteries on "Lost." Currently in phase three of five of the interactive challenge, the meaning behind the numbers 4 8 15 16 23 42, which play a significant role on the television series, will be revealed.

"The reward we've always promised from the Lost Experience is information, which is currency to anyone who is a fan of the show or a participant in this game," said Mike Benson, senior vice president of Marketing for ABC Entertainment. "This additional form of storytelling allows us to engage current and new fans in a genuinely innovative way while delivering the same extraordinary content that 'Lost' provides as a television series."

So far, the Lost Experience has unveiled information regarding the Black Rock, in addition to significance in the title of the DHARMA Initiative. The Lost Experience will continue to the premiere of Season Three, revealing secrets behind the mysterious Alvar Hanso and the Hanso Foundation.

It is not too late to join in on the Lost Experience. Those wishing to participate can do so by viewing a synopsis at [http://blogs.abc.com/inside\\_the\\_experience/](http://blogs.abc.com/inside_the_experience/) which allows new participants the chance to enter into the Experience with ease.

### **About the Lost Experience**

The Lost Experience follows a parallel storyline not featured in the television broadcast and is designed so that both fans of the series and those unfamiliar with the show can participate. The Experience provides insight to unlock some of the island's secrets for those savvy enough to collect the clues, make the connections and find the answers. Clues first appeared May 2 in the UK, May 3 in the U.S., and May 4 in Australia. Although the Lost Experience is internet-based, participants should not assume that clues and story content will be limited to the online world. Any and every platform has the potential to contain hidden secrets. Given the different broadcast windows around the world, this challenge is designed in a manner that is not dependent on information specific to either Season One or Season Two, allowing those who have not yet seen either season of "Lost" to participate.

### **About "Lost"**

After Oceanic Air flight 815 tore apart in mid-air and crashed on a seemingly deserted Pacific island, its survivors were forced to find inner strength they never knew they had in order to survive. The band of friends, family, enemies and strangers have become reluctant heroes who must work together against the cruel weather and harsh terrain if they want to stay alive. Danger and mystery

loom behind every corner on the island, and those they thought could be trusted may turn against them. Even heroes have secrets.

"Lost" stars Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje as Mr. Eko, Naveen Andrews as Sayid, Emilie de Ravin as Claire, Matthew Fox as Jack, Jorge Garcia as Hurley, Josh Holloway as Sawyer, Daniel Dae Kim as Jin, Yunjin Kim as Sun, Evangeline Lilly as Kate, Dominic Monaghan as Charlie, Terry O'Quinn as Locke, Harold Perrineau as Michael, Michelle Rodriguez as Ana Lucia and Cynthia Watros as Libby.

"Lost" was created by Jeffrey Lieber and J.J. Abrams & Damon Lindelof. Abrams, Lindelof, Bryan Burk, Jack Bender and Carlton Cuse serve as executive producers. "Lost," which is filmed entirely on location in Hawaii, is from Touchstone Television.

### **About ABC**

ABC Entertainment offers quality, award-winning programming that includes many of the most widely viewed series, specials and movies. Primetime Entertainment on ABC crosses various programming genres with hit series like "Desperate Housewives," "Lost," "Grey's Anatomy," "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition," "Boston Legal," "According to Jim," "George Lopez," "Dancing with the Stars," "America's Funniest Home Videos," "Supernanny," and "Wife Swap." In Late-Night, "Jimmy Kimmel Live" celebrated its third anniversary in January, 2006. C Entertainment is part of the ABC Television Network and is managed by Disney-ABC Television Group, a division of The Walt Disney Company.

### **5) Interview with *Lost* Executive produces Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse.**

**Document:** Online article

**Title:** BuddyTV Interviews LOST's Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse - and gets Answers!

**Author:** BuddyTV

**Source:** BuddyTV website

**Published:** 07 March 2007

**Available at:** <http://www.buddytv.com/articles/lost/buddytv-interviews-losts-damon-4766.aspx>

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Referenced as:** (BuddyTV, 2007)

### **BuddyTV Interviews LOST's Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse - and gets Answers! [7 May, 2007]**

It has captured imaginations, and frustrated viewers for three seasons now, it is ABC's monolithic smash hit **LOST**. Lately, the show has been besieged with complaints that there are no answers, so

we sent our intrepid LOST guru Jon "DocArzt" Lachonis in search of some of the details LOST fans crave. He sat down with LOST executive producers and writers Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse to get some insight on the island's biggest mysteries. Will there be another LOST Experience? Will Marvin Candle ever escape the confines of gritty 16mm orientation films? Are there twins among the others? What does the forthcoming game from UbiSoft hold in store for fans? When will season four premiere? And, what is up with that mysterious cable? The answers are here.

**BuddyTV:** Is there enough information given on the show that someone could put together a fact-based theory that more or less explains what's going on, on the island?

**Carlton Cuse:** I don't think so, I mean, the story is not yet complete. I don't think there's enough that we've put out there that would allow someone to draw a conclusive theory about the island and the show.

**Damon Lindelof:** I think that there are bits and pieces that someone could put together. Recently Carlton and I put out to the Yahoo community all over the world, what do you think the monster is? And some people came alarmingly close to what its origins were, how it functions, what its purpose is, but they weren't able to go the next level as Carlton says, deeper into saying, "That's what it is but what does that mean in the grander scheme of what the island is." It doesn't mean that someone couldn't accidentally back into it and anticipate something that they haven't seen yet. But sort of the real hardcore intel about the island is going to start to reveal itself towards the end of the season as we learn more about the others.

**BuddyTV:** One thing that's a bit of controversy in the fan community is whether or not any of the information from The Lost Experience game is actually a factor in the universe of the show. Is that something you could clear up for us?

**Carlton Cuse:** I think that for us, yeah, I mean, all of Alvar Hanso and his relationship with funding the Dharma Initiative is part of the mythology. The details of the Hanso Foundation's demise...it's tangential to the show but it's not unrelated to the show. We sort of felt like the Internet Experience was a way for us to get out mythologies that we would never get to in the show. I mean, because this is mythology that doesn't have an effect on the character's lives or existence on the island. We created it for purposes of understanding the world of the show but it

was something that was always going to be sort of below the water, sort of the iceberg metaphor, and the Internet Experience sort of gave us a chance to reveal it.

**Damon Lindelof:** I would say in terms of all the... background that we did, in terms of the Valenzetti equation and explaining the formation of the Hanso Foundation and doing the other films...we'd consider that stuff cannon to the show. Where there'd have to be wiggle room is the Rachel Blake story where she's in the real world, in the outside world as we define it, the show *Lost* might be defined in an entirely different outside world so we can't vouch for the overall fit ability and veracity of everything that Rachel was doing. But we can say that all the factoids that she was uncovering were vetted, in fact many of them were written by us personally so they are cannon.

**BuddyTV:** **Is there going to be another Lost Experience at some point? Will those characters be revisited?**

**Carlton Cuse:** I don't think those characters would be revisited. As to whether there's going to be another Lost Experience, there's been discussions about it and I think it would only happen if we found another story that again, felt like it was worth telling but that we weren't going to get around to telling it on the mother ship.

**BuddyTV:** **Going way back, and maybe I'm just imagining this but at the end of Season 1, there was a pair of twins on Mr. Friendly's pleasure yacht and I swear that somebody said that the twins were going to become important to the storyline at a future date. Is that still something that's hanging around in the background somewhere?**

Damon Lindelof: I remember the twins because we hired the twin stuntmen to be guys on the boat but I don't ever recall having said, although it's highly possible, sometimes we get asked questions at Comicon for example about like nano clouds and stuff like that and things that we say in jest actually just come back and slap us later from the press in terms of saying, "You said that twins would be of critical importance to later story telling." It sounds like something we might say talking out of the side of our mouths but we can tell you, sitting here now that twins have nothing to do whatsoever with the mythology of the show.

**BuddyTV:** **Also going back a bit, I know at one point during Season 2, Darren Aronofsky approached you guys about directing an episode. Is that something that still might come about?**

Carlton Cuse: No, you know basically it turned out that Darren still had work to do on his movie and Rachel Weisz was having their child and he had too many outside commitments and really we haven't revisited it since then so there's no plans for Darren to come and direct on the show.

**BuddyTV:** So far there's been three David's in the show: Hurley's Dad, Libby's husband and Hurley's imaginary friend. Is there anything to that or do you guys just like the name David?

**Damon Lindelof:** We like certain biblical names and David is one of them. David happened to be my father's name, maybe that's sort of subconsciously rattling around in there.

**Carlton Cuse:** The connection between the imaginary Dave and Dave his father was completely intentional, I mean we wanted basically Hurley to imagine a friend and have that be wrapped up in his unresolved relationship with his Dad, so that's why his imaginary friend is named Dave.

**Damon Lindelof:** As to Libby's ex, that's an entirely different David we may or may not meet in the future.

## 6) Transcript of The Hanso Foundation commercials

**Document:** TV commercials

**Information:** The Hanso Foundation commercials, created for *The Lost Experience* campaign launched by ABC.

**Author:** ABC and HiRes!

**Source:** ABC channel (US) and Channel 4 (UK)

**Aired:** May 2006

**Available on:** YouTube

**Description:** Transcription of the whole commercials.

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

(1) Aired in ABC channel, May 2006<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1r5NhCON8>

Voiceover: “Since the dawn of time, man has been curious, imaging all that is possible. The Hanso Foundation, reaching out to a better tomorrow.

Discover the experience for yourself; call 1 877 HANSORG”

**(2) Aired in ABC channel, May 2006<sup>3</sup>**

Voiceover: “Since the dawn of time, man has been curious, imaging all that is possible. The Hanso Foundation, reaching out to a better tomorrow.

Discover the experience for yourself; go to [www.letyourcompassguideyou.com](http://www.letyourcompassguideyou.com)

1 877 HANSORG”

**(3) Aired in ABC channel, May 2006<sup>4</sup>**

Voiceover: “Since the dawn of time, man has been curious, imaging all that is possible. The Hanso Foundation, reaching out to a better tomorrow.

Discover the experience for yourself; go to [hansocareers.com](http://hansocareers.com)”

**(4) Aired in Channel 4 (UK), May 2006<sup>5</sup>**

Voiceover: “Since the dawn of time, man has been curious, imaging all that is possible. The Hanso Foundation, reaching out to a better tomorrow.

Discover the experience for yourself; call 0800 66 66 40W”

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<sup>3</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkIomChcEIg&feature=related>

<sup>4</sup> Available on URL: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAQ-OS2fgxE&feature=Playlist&p=92653FB701E79B96&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=28](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAQ-OS2fgxE&feature=Playlist&p=92653FB701E79B96&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=28)

<sup>5</sup> Available on URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5RQplPKI-Y&feature=related>



7) **Links to Rachel Blake's video-posts.**

**Document:** Video

**Description:** Videos posted by fictional character Rachel Blake on her blogs, created for *The Lost Experience* campaign launched by ABC.

**Author:** ABC Entertainment and HiRes!

**Source:** stophanso.rachelblake.com and rachelblake.com

**Published:** From June to September 2006

**Available on:** YouTube

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Video 1:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_nMiMB2Gao&feature=player\\_embedded#at=30](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_nMiMB2Gao&feature=player_embedded#at=30)

**Video 2:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTm1ZuUEwdw&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTm1ZuUEwdw&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 3:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vk8oD5ic9JQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vk8oD5ic9JQ&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 4:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbDnJHGpVCk>

**Video 5:**

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE5BLvbtVdw&feature=PlayList&p=DDE6BC448791127A&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FE5BLvbtVdw&feature=PlayList&p=DDE6BC448791127A&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=4)

**Video 6:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aXE0tZZRSg&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2aXE0tZZRSg&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 7:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7kxYDFPytk&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7kxYDFPytk&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 8:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qob9AUinx3w&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qob9AUinx3w&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 9:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-eC99Q9-B0&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-eC99Q9-B0&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 10:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77h6n1JC1E&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77h6n1JC1E&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 11:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_PPCCcXarkc&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PPCCcXarkc&feature=player_embedded)

**Video 12:** [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjFsMfdzbBs&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjFsMfdzbBs&feature=player_embedded)

## 8) Rachel Blake interruption of *Lost* Q&A panel hold in San Diego

**Document:** Video

**Information:** Lost Q&A panel hold at Comic-Con, in San Diego. San Diego Comic-Con International is one of the largest convections in the world about comic and popular arts. Fictional character Rachel Blake interrupted the conference, as part of *The Lost Experience* campaign launched by ABC.

**Author:** ABC Entertainment

**Source:** Comic-Con'06 convection in San Diego

**Published:** July 2006

**Available on:** YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wL9VqYf9UE&feature=related>

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Description:** Transcription of the fragment from 00:02:00 to 00:03:21

### Transcription of the fragment from 00:02:00 to 00:03:21:

	Paragraph number
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> “You are protecting a very real, very dangerous organisation.”	1
<b>Actor #1:</b> “Look, it’s not real. It’s a television show.”	2
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> “It is real. The Hanso Foundation is real, The Dharma Initiative is real, Dr. Mittelwerk is real and what he’s doing right now...he’s doing terrible things. That’s real. [...] (continues)...and my name is Rachel Blake, and I am real! And if you want the truth you’ll go to <a href="http://hansoexposed.com">hansoexposed.com</a>	3
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> (pointing at each of the actors) You have blood in your hands!, You have blood in your hands! You have blood in your hands!”	4
(Rachel is escorted out)	5

**9) Transcription of the short documentary about The Lost Experience shown in Channel Four**

**Document:** Video documental

**Name:** The Los Experience

**Description:** Transcription of the entire documentary (4 min. 24 sec.)

**Author:** Channel 4 (UK)

**Source:** Channel 4 (UK)

**Aired on:** 2007

**Available on:** YouTube and the advertising agency Hi-Res! website

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6phwqrqlGwE&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6phwqrqlGwE&feature=player_embedded)

<http://www.hi-res.net/awards/thelostexperience/>

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Referenced as:** (Channel 4, 2007)

	Paragraph number
<b>Tracy Blacher (Head of Marketing New Media, Channel 4):</b> “Rachel was an amazing success, in so many ways beyond the world extremes. To create a phenomenon that people in different continents are talking about simultaneously...”	1
Steve Forde (New Media Marketing Manager, Channel 4): “...There was hundreds of podcasts put together. There was thousand and thousand of blogs...It just kind of spiralled into this massive snowball of excitement.”	2
<b>Voiceover:</b> “During 2006, Channel 4 and the online design agency Hi-Res! worked with the creators of the hit TV programme <i>Lost</i> to develop an extensive alternate reality game called <i>The Lost Experience</i> . Essentially, <i>The Lost Experience</i> supplied fans with the background on <i>The Dharma Initiative</i> , the mysterious project being carried out on the island in the main show. This back story revolves around the company behind <i>The Dharma Initiative</i> , known as <i>The Hanso Foundation</i> . Young woman by the name of Rachel Blake is determined to uncover the whereabouts of the founder, Alvar Hanso, and in doing so reveals the truth about the supposedly altruistic Hanso Foundation.	3
At its peak there were around 50,000 UK players actively engaged in the experience. And searching for <i>The Lost Experience</i> on Google delivered over 6 million search	4

results.”

Unique callers to the initial phone line 50,000

Over 50,000 unique players

More than 7 terabytes of traffic per month

### **Phase 1: From May to June 2006**

**Voiceover:** “Rachel Blake using the pseudonym Persephone hacked into *The Hanso Foundation* website over a period of six weeks, revealing truths about projects and the board of directors.”

**Tracy Blacher** (Head of Marketing New Media, Channel 4): “I was blowing away on a daily basis by just how passionate were about what was being created, and about how complex the mystery solving became. So there were days where I’d come in and there were hundreds of blogs reporting on clues and being updated with information, gathering together a cold calling for people with different skills sets, from Physics degrees to Maths...all sorts of different skills all coming together to solve different clues.”

### **Phase 2: From June to July 2006**

**Voiceover:** “Once that *The Hanso Foundation* realised that the site was being hacked, they shut it down. However, Rachel left a hidden URL in the site source-code. On the face of it this site looked like an innocent travel blog. However, once a password had been entered, the site changed to reveal a daily video diary on the continuing investigation.”

### **Phase 3: From July to August 2006**

**Voiceover:** “Rachel shot a piece of video which she split into 60 one-minute fragments. Each of these was given a unique code which could be used to unlock the individual video-fragments on [hansoexpose.com](http://hansoexpose.com). In order to make the code recognisable to the fans we created hieroglyphics which were hidden across the world and on underflying locations.”

#### Phase 4: August to September 2006

10

**Voiceover:** “The Apollo Chocolate Bar which features in Lost was manufactured specifically for the experience. Each of these specially created bars had an URL moulded into it: whereisalvar.com. Founders of the bars were then able to upload a picture of themselves with their bars to the website.”

#### Phase 5: From September to October 2006

11

**Voiceover:** “The final phase was an Internet radio broadcast by DJ Dan, a well-known US shock jock, who’s been following the investigation. During a live phony show he took a call from Rachel Blake where she revealed that she’d hidden the last video-evidence on her site.”

**Tracy Blacher (Head of Marketing New Media, Channel 4):** “What experiences like this mean is that people can still get involved in extrapolating information, sharing their passion with peers, finding other like-minded people. And that’s something incredibly exciting that we’d definitely love to explore further in the future.”

12

#### 10) Transcript of Rachel Blake’s 11<sup>th</sup> video (aka *Sri Lanka* video).

**Document:** Video

**Name:** Rachel Blake’s 11<sup>th</sup> video (aka *Sri Lanka* video).

**Description:** Video posted by fictional character Rachel Blake, created for *The Lost Experience* campaign launched by ABC. This is the 11<sup>th</sup> video published by Rachel Blake online. The Sri Lanka video was broken down into 60 pieces that participants in the game had to put together.

**Author:** ABC Entertainment and HiRes!

**Source:** hansoexposed.com

**Published:** September 2006

**Available on:** YouTube

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

Paragraph  
number

#### Part 1

1

[Music plays]

© 1975 The Hanso Foundation \* ORIENTATION \*

**Alvar Hanso:** I'm Alvar Hanso. If you are watching this film, you already know and have worked with Gerald and Karen DeGroot, founders and masterminds of the DHARMA Initiative. 2

By now, you also know there are many research goals for our joint venture. What you may not know, is why we have assembled the DHARMA Initiative, why we have assembled the greatest minds in the world and given them unlimited funds and access. 3

As with all you've already been told, you are bound by your honour and commitment to keep what you are about to hear a secret. 4

In a few weeks, after your induction counseling and survival training, you and your colleagues will be shipped to a top secret facility... 5

The precise location of the facility is known only to myself, the DeGroots, and the few high ranking members of my organization. Why all the security, all the secrecy? The answer is simple: Your research is intended to do nothing less than save the world as we know it. 6

In 1962, only thirteen years ago, the world came to the brink of nuclear war. The United States and the Soviet Union almost fulfilled the promise of mutual assured destruction. A promise they continue to foster through a destructive Cold War. After the Cuban Missile Crisis, both nations decided to find a solution. The result was the Valenzetti Equation. Commissioned under the highest secrecy, through the U.N. Security Council, the equation is the brainchild of the Italian mathematician Enzo Valenzetti. It predicts the exact number of years and months until humanity extinguishes itself. Whether through nuclear fire, chemical and biological warfare, conventional warfare, pandemic, over-population... The results are chilling, and attention must be paid... 7

Valenzetti gave numerical values to the core environmental and human factors in his equation: 4, 8, 15, 16, 23 and 42. Only by manipulating the environment, by finding scientific solutions to our problems we will be able to change those core factors, and give humanity a chance to survive. Although the equation has been buried by those 8

who commissioned it *[STATIC]* panic. It has always been my belief that we ignore warnings at our own peril; and thus, the DHARMA Initiative was born.

DHARMA is an acronym for Department of Heuristics and Research on Material Applications. It also stands for the one true way. *[STATIC]* ...and through your research, you will help human... *[STATIC]*.

We have constructed several stations on the island, underground laboratories with the facilities you will need to do your research, with optimal expediency...all of the support you will need, including regular medicine and food drops will be made in perpetuity.

A radio transmitter has also been erected on the island broadcasting in a frequency and encryption known only to us. The transmitter will only broadcast the core numerical values of the Valenzetti Equation. When, through your research, you manage to change the numerical value of any one of these factors, when you have created through science the *[inaudible]* ... We will know that the one true way has been found.

That is the work to which you have committed yourself. Change the core values of the Valenzetti Equation, and you will change the course of destiny. The fate of the human race is in your hands.

Thank you and namaste.

**Part 2**[The end of Part 1 is displayed on a television monitor next to a man in a white labcoat who is standing in front of a small audience.]

**Thomas Mittelwerk:** We all know what happened - the DHARMA Initiative failed and in spite of every effort of the Foundation, we are gripped in the tyranny of those six numbers.

We have tried to change those values by manipulating the environment in many, many ways. We have done our level best, and yet this inscrutable equation keeps bringing us back to the numbers. So now, we have to take radical action and I just

want to tell all of you, that I trust you to do what is best.

The villages of Fallam and Vetul-Milani have allowed us to test our vaccine on them. 17  
They think they are infected by a virus carried by local macaques and they believe  
we are bringing them the cure, so when you go in, you have to keep up the story.  
You know it by heart, don't waver. When the deaths begin you must comfort  
everyone with compassion and empathy then the bodies of the dead must be brought  
to the station immediately for full genetic work-up. We must make absolute certain  
we are hitting precise genetic targets we have engineered into the virus.

The optimal mortality rate is 30 percent. Our operatives at the Vik Institute have 18  
verified this figure. If more or less people succumb, we have failed. We need not take  
any more lives than is absolutely necessary.

Yes? 19

**Scientist #1:** (Raises hand) But Tom, these are people, innocent human beings, and 20  
we're just-

**Mittelwerk:** If you knew, with mathematical certainty, that you could end all 21  
famine, war, and poverty, what would you do? Exactly, you'd find the best way to get  
it done - precisely, surgically, without allowing for any more suffering than is  
absolutely necessary. (Sigh)

**Mittelwerk:** If you knew, with mathematical certainty, that you could end all 22  
famine, war, and poverty, what would you do? Exactly, you'd find the best way to get  
it done - precisely, surgically, without allowing for any more suffering than is  
absolutely necessary. (Sigh)

It is not fair that innocents have to die so that we can perfect this virus but I promise 23  
you, someone is going to hell...

Is there something... reflecting... in the back?

**Rachel Blake:** Oh God! 24



<b>Mittelwerk:</b> Somebody grab her! Hey! Hey! Get her! (incomprehensible shouting)	25
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> No! Get off me! Get off! No!	26
<b>Scientist #2:</b> We got her.	27
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> Get off me! No! It's....	28

## 11) ABC Group Press Release (20 September 2006)

**Document:** Press Release  
**Title:** The Lost Experience comes to a close September 24  
**Author:** Disney ABC Group  
**Source:** Disney ABC Group Press Releases  
**Published:** 20 September 2006  
**Available at:** [http://lost.beloblog.com/archives/2006/09/the\\_grinding\\_ha.html](http://lost.beloblog.com/archives/2006/09/the_grinding_ha.html)  
**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009  
**Referenced as:** (Disney ABC Group, 2006c)

### The Lost Experience comes to a close September 24 [20 September, 2006]

*Live Broadcast Features Special In-Studio Guest Sunday, September 24, 8:00 p.m., PT*

The multiplatform interactive phenomenon "The Lost Experience" will come to a climactic close on SEPTEMBER 24 (8:00 p.m., PT, 5:00 p.m., ET), with a live worldwide radio internet broadcast hosted by the renegade DJ Dan. The broadcast will also feature a special in-studio guest and announce a link for the final video clue revealing the truth behind the actions of the Hanso Foundation. DJ Dan's previous broadcast gave clues leading to the Sri Lanka video, which unveiled the meaning behind the numbers 4 8 15 16 23 42. To listen to the broadcast, go to [www.abc.com](http://www.abc.com).

#### About "The Lost Experience"

"The Lost Experience" is a revolutionary interactive marketing endeavor based on the international hit television series, "Lost," designed to further enhance viewers' relationship with the program. "The Lost Experience" incorporates over twenty broadcasters from five continents, making it the largest global interactive challenge based on a television series. This experience follows a parallel storyline not featured in the television broadcast, and the challenge is specifically designed in a manner that is not dependent on information specific to either Season One or Season Two, allowing

for the participation of those who have not yet seen either season of "Lost". "The Lost Experience" provides insight to unlock some of the island's secrets for those savvy enough to collect the clues, make the connections and find the answers.

### About "Lost"

After Oceanic Air flight 815 tore apart in mid-air and crashed on a Pacific island, its survivors were forced to find inner strength they never knew they had in order to survive. But they discovered that the island holds many secrets, including a mysterious smoke monster, polar bears, a strange French woman and another group of island residents known as "The Others." The survivors have also found signs of those who came to the island before them, including a 19th-century sailing ship, The Black Rock, the remains of an ancient statue and bunkers belonging to the Dharma Initiative, a group of scientific researchers.

"Lost" stars Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje as Mr. Eko, Naveen Andrews as Sayid, Henry Ian Cusick as Desmond, Emilie de Ravin as Claire, Michael Emerson as Henry Gale, Matthew Fox as Jack, Jorge Garcia as Hurley, Josh Holloway as Sawyer, Daniel Dae Kim as Jin, Yunjin Kim as Sun, Evangeline Lilly as Kate, Elizabeth Mitchell as Juliet, Dominic Monaghan as Charlie and Terry O'Quinn as Locke.

"Lost" was created by Jeffrey Lieber and J.J. Abrams & Damon Lindelof. Abrams, Lindelof, Bryan Burk, Jack Bender, Jeff Pinkner and Carlton Cuse serve as executive producers. "Lost," which is filmed entirely on location in Hawaii and premiered on September 22, 2004, is from Touchstone Television.

### 12) Transcript of Rachel's Blake Final Video (aka *Norway Video*)

**Document:** Video

**Name:** Rachel's Blake Final Video (aka *Norway Video*)

**Description:** Video posted by fictional character Rachel Blake, created for *The Lost Experience* campaign launched by ABC. This is the 12<sup>th</sup> video published by Rachel Blake online.

**Author:** ABC Entertainment and HiRes!

**Source:** hanzoexposed.com

**Published:** September 2006

**Available on:** YouTube

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

(Outside a house, Rachel knocks. Titles show up that she is in Narvik, Norway. A

Paragraph  
number

1

man answers the door, letting her in. Inside, opera music plays and we see another man stood in the living room. The man is Alvar Hanso)

**Alvar Hanso:** Leave us.

2

(The man goes upstairs, as Alvar motions Rachel to sit)

**Alvar Hanso:** (Sighs) Rachel Blake.

3

**Rachel Blake:** You recognise me?

4

**Alvar Hanso:** How did you get past security?

5

**Rachel Blake:** I have contacts in your foundation. The nurse who comes in regularly to take your blood was called away on a family emergency. I'm her replacement.

6

**Alvar Hanso:** (Chuckles) Clever. So, did you come to draw blood?

7

**Rachel Blake:** How can you joke, after everything you've done?

8

**Alvar Hanso:** You brought in a recording device.

9

**Rachel Blake:** No. This is between you and me.

10

**Alvar Hanso:** I can hear it Rachel, it's in your bag. You must have thought you could walk into my home, armed with nothing but the truth, and extract a confession from me.

11

**Rachel Blake:** Something like that.

12

**Alvar Hanso:** (Chuckles again) I find your idealism touching. And, since it's the truth you came for, I suppose that is what I should give you. On tape.

13

(Rachel moves the camera round to face Alvar, as he sits up in his chair quickly)

**Alvar Hanso:** The men you see here, work for the Foundation, they do not work for me. Their job is to keep me inside. To keep me from talking to anyone of importance. I'm a prisoner...

14

<b>Rachel:</b> No! You are not dodging the blame.	15
<b>Alvar Hanso:</b> No. I'm not. I am to blame. For training Thomas Werner Mittelwerk. For grooming him to be my successor. For giving him all the tools he needed to do the awful things he has. He cannot kill me, but he can keep me locked up while he kills millions of what...	16
(Rumbling from outside the room spooks both Blake and Hanso, and Rachel has to momentarily cover the camera)	
<b>Alvar Hanso:</b> ..he is the one who has done all of the things that you have exposed. And much worse, all in my name. And yours.	17
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> Mine?	18
<b>Alvar Hanso:</b> That's why you came. The reason why you've investigated the Foundation. You wanted to learn more about the trust fund that paid for your upbringing. You wondered how a single mother, could pay for an education, and all the advantages you were given. But you, are a beautifully intelligent young woman, and you were able to trace the funds back to the Foundation. You searched, and even as you realized all the evil that was being done, even as you turned against everything that the Foundation now stands for, you kept on, because you knew the path would lead, to your father. And now I need your help, even if I don't deserve it. I may never leave this house alive, and it's only a matter of time before the guards realise who you are. So take this confession, get it to the press, to the authorities, to anyone who will listen! Make a scandal, Rachel! You are the only one who can bring down Mittelwerk, and set me free. Go now Rachel, finish this once and for all. Go!	19
<b>Rachel Blake:</b> So long... Dad.	20
(Rachel begins to leave as the video cuts out)	

### 13) The LOST Experience, according to the advertising agency Hi-Res!

**Document:** Online text  
**Title:** The LOST Experience  
**Author:** Hi-Res!  
**Source:** Hi-Res! website

**Published:** Unknown date

**Available at:** <http://www.hi-res.net/awards/thelostexperience/>

**Retrieved:** 18 October 2009

**Referenced as:** (Hi-Res!, 2007)

## The LOST Experience

The **Lost Experience** was a multi media marketing alternate reality game developed by Channel 4 to support Season Two of LOST.

The marketing campaign was designed to unite LOST fans from around the world in an alternative reality game developed as a spin-off from the TV programme. Working closely with the writers behind LOST, the **Lost Experience** revealed the ‘back-story’ of the Hanso Foundation, the shadowy organisation behind the fictitious Dharma Initiative which sits at the heart of the TV series. A detailed combination of TV adverts, fake websites, call-centres, blogs, chocolate bars, video and flash mobs were co-ordinated to enable users to follow the story of Rachel Blake, an ex-employee of the Hanso Foundation trying to uncover the truth behind the company’s sinister activities. In the UK alone over 30,000 unique users regularly interacted with the alternate reality game.

### Principal In-Game Websites

Due to the nature of the game, clues and hacks were released over the 6 months the game ran. While the websites below will give you an idea of the breadth of the experience, it is very difficult to re-create the excitement that came out of the constant reveal of new details, the launch of new sites, fragments of the story, etc.

Please refer to the video above for a (very brief) overview of the experience...

### The Hanso Foundation

[www.rachelblake.com](http://www.rachelblake.com)

[stophanso.rachelblake.com](http://stophanso.rachelblake.com)

### Apollo Candy

### HansoExposed

### DJ Dan

[whereisalvar.com](http://whereisalvar.com)

The Lost Experience highlights the fine line between marketing and content in a hugely ambitious way, adding a sense of realism to a fictional show. It was about breaking the rules and doing something groundbreaking and new, finding ever more creative ways of storytelling and rewarding the most loyal fans. Ultimately it was about the wisdom of crowds, a truly global network of fans coming together to unfold a story, to tell it to others and to become an integral part of the story itself. The writers of LOST are amongst the best storytellers around today – this harnesses their skills in a fluid and non-traditional way, allowing a more collaborative reveal of plot and characters and harnessing the speculative nature of the show.

Launched in May 2006 there were five key stages to the Experience:

1. A specially filmed advert for The Hanso Foundation was broadcast on Channel 4 during the first episode of Season Two on May 2nd 2006 (and subsequently on ABC in the US). The advert led players (via a call centre) to the Hanso Foundation website ([www.thehansofoundation.org](http://www.thehansofoundation.org)) which was hacked by Rachel Blake revealing clues to players into the sinister activities of this apparently altruistic organisation.
2. In response to the hacking [www.thehansofoundation.org](http://www.thehansofoundation.org) is quickly shut down. Source code in the shut-down site guided users Rachel's travel blog at [www.RachelBlake.com](http://www.RachelBlake.com). The travel blog is revealed to be a video log from Rachel with further revelations about The Hanso Foundation and its senior staff.
3. A video revealing an explosive secret about The Hanso Foundation was then coded and hidden in 60 video fragments across the globe both online and offline. When the video codes were entered into [www.hansoexposed.com](http://www.hansoexposed.com) the video fragments could be viewed as a whole. Channel 4 hid video fragments within E4 idents and hosted two 'flash mob' events in London and Manchester. To compile all the video clips relied on players from around the globe co-operating – the full sequence revealed the secret behind the famous numbers - 4 8 15 16 23 42.
4. Ten thousand Apollo bars, the chocolate bar featured in *Lost* Season One, were released in selected outlets across the UK. The chocolate bars were stamped with a new url, [www.whereisalvar.com](http://www.whereisalvar.com). A small number of chocolate bars contained a special code which, when entered onto the site, provided a clue to the final stage of the game.
5. The final phase was an Internet radio broadcast by DJ Dan, a well-known US shock-jock. During a live phone-in show he took a call from Rachel Blake who announced the final website leading to the ultimate secret of the *Lost* Experience – Rachel Blake was the daughter of Alvar Hanso, the founder of the Hanso Foundation.

#### 14) Content of *Lost* Official Website.

<b>Author:</b> Personal compilation <b>Source:</b> <i>Lost Official Website</i> , <a href="http://abc.go.com/shows/lost/">http://abc.go.com/shows/lost/</a>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

ABC has made the following content available on the site:

- Full episodes: U.S. users have online access to all the full episodes of the show on ABC official website.
- Videos: ABC has made a wide variety of videos related to the *Lost* universe available on the official site. In October 2009, the :
  - o “Moments” and “Quick cuts”: Under these subsections of the site, users can find a number of videos displaying selected scenes of the last season of show, which were crucial in the story.
  - o “Dharma special access”: This selection of videos are presented by Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse, executive producers of the show. In the videos Lindelof and Cuse talk about a variety of topics related to the series, answer some of the questions

formulated by the fans, show how the offices where they work on *Lost* look like, and promote the use of other sections of the website.

- “Ask *Lost*”: Interviews with some of the actors of the show, who reply to the questions sent by *Lost* fans.
- “*Dharma* Mysteries”: Four videos on the fictional organisation *The Dharma Initiative*, which has a key role in the story of the show. The videos, called *Mysteries of the Universe*, emulate the aesthetic of a 1970s documentary which attempt to investigate the mysterious organisation.
- “*Lost* at Comic-Con 2009”: Actors and creators of *Lost* have been attending the annual convection *Comic-Con*<sup>6</sup> since the series began. This category of videos displays some of the interviews from the last Comic-Con event.
- “Untangled”: *Lost Untangled* is a new comical way of recapping the new episodes of *Lost*. Each episode is around four to six minutes long and includes the use of the official *Lost* action figures, comic-book style stills and clips from the episodes.
- Podcasts: The Official *Lost* Podcast is presented by Kris White and features cast interviews and behind-the-scenes info. Producers Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse also talk about the latest and upcoming episodes, as well as answer fan questions.
- A Forum to host the discussions between the fans.
- Pictures: Dozens of pictures taken from each of the episodes.
- Miscellaneous: Character’s bios, Connections between the characters and timeline, The *Lost* Book Club, and several Applications (called widgets).

## 15) List of some *Lost* fan websites, blogs, and online communities

**Author:** Personal compilation

**Source:** The Internet

- 1) <http://thelostexperienceclues.blogspot.com/>
- 2) <http://www.thelostexperience.com/>
- 3) <http://lost.wfaa.com/>
- 4) <http://forum.lostpedia.com/>
- 5) [http://twitter.com/LOST\\_on\\_abc](http://twitter.com/LOST_on_abc)

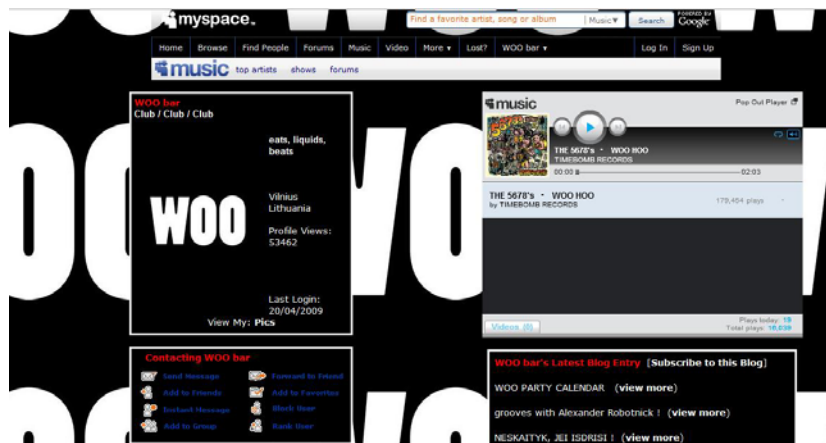
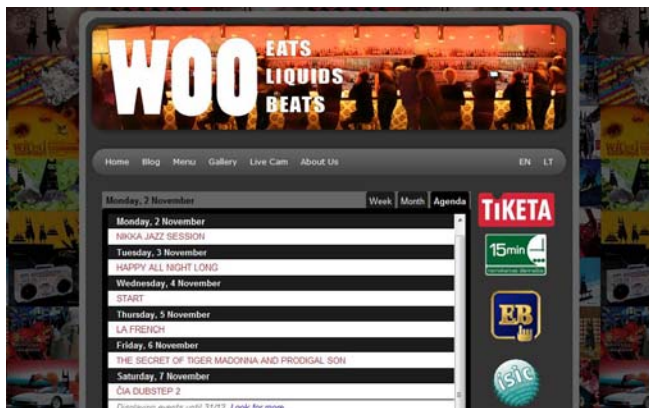
---

<sup>6</sup> San Diego Comic-Con International, commonly known as Comic-Con is one of the largest convections in the world about comic and popular arts. The convection, which takes place in San Diego (U.S.), is a four-day annual event, normally held during the summer. Website: <http://www.comic-con.org/ccli/>

- 6) <http://lost-media.com/>
- 7) <http://www.lost.com/>
- 8) <http://www.creationent.com/lost/index.htm>
- 9) <http://www.sl-lost.com/>
- 10) <http://www.fanpop.com/spots/lost>
- 11) <http://www.lostaholics.com/la/?cat=59>
- 12) <http://www.lostblog.net/>
- 13) <http://www.thetailsection.com/>
- 14) <http://previously-on-lost.com/>
- 15) <http://find815.blogspot.com/>
- 16) <http://www.losttvfans.com>
- 17) <http://lostdiscussion.wetpaint.com/>
- 18) <http://www.losttv-forum.com>
- 19) <http://www.lostfan.net/>
- 20) <http://abclost.blogspot.com/>
- 21) <http://www.thelostfan.com/>
- 22) <http://www.lostfic.com/>
- 23) <http://best.lostguide.ever.com/>
- 24) <http://www.4815162342.com>



## Appendix 5: Screenshots for section 4.2.2.



Woo bar's profile on Facebook, Twitter, website, blog, and MySpace profile.

▼ IdeaStorm Categories

» All

Product Ideas

» Accessories (Keyboards, etc.)

» Adamo

» Alienware

» Broadband and Mobility

» Desktops

» Desktops and Laptops

» Dimension

» Inspiron

» Laptop Power

» Laptops

» Latitude

» Linux

» Monitors and Displays

» Netbooks

» New Product Ideas

» Operating Systems

» OptiPlex

» Precision Workstations

» Printers and Ink

» Servers and Storage

» Software

» Studio

VIEW

all posted ideas by the community

POST

your idea for Dell products or services

VOTE

promote or demote ideas

SEE

your ideas in action

Sort By:

Popular Ideas

Recent Ideas

Top Ideas

Comments

39080

Standardize Power Cables for Laptops

By badblood, Aug 27, 2007 |

Promote

Demote

Nothing is more annoying than laptop power cables that are not interchangeable from one computer model to another or from one brand of computer to another. Power cables have been standardized on most electrical appliances, including desktop computers for decades.

Make an effort to promote and implement standard power cables for laptops.

**DELL Status Update**

Please see dawn\_l's comments below.

Comments: **134**

Categories: Accessories (Keyboards, etc.) Laptops

Status: Under Review

1170

Bring Back Indicator Lights

By Aloy, Sep 25, 2009 |

Promote

Sign in.

Username:

Password:

Login

Forgot Password?

Not a member? Register Here

Ideastorm Video

General Stats

The Dell Community has:

- Contributed 12,933 ideas
- Promoted 698,524 times
- Posted 87,745 comments

Dell has:

- Implemented 388 ideas

A fragment of Dell IdeaStorm's front page. Dell implemented a bit less than 400 ideas by November, 2009. Available on URL: <http://www.ideastorm.com/>

my STARBUCKS IDEA

GOT AN IDEA?

VIEW IDEAS

IDEAS IN ACTION

MOST POPULAR TODAY

MOST RECENT

TOP ALL-TIME

MOST COMMENTED

follow us on

HI THERE.

SIGN IN TO MAKE A COMMENT.

SIGN IN NOW

Search

→

Our ideas so far

Product Ideas

Coffee & Espresso Drinks 19023

Tea & Other Drinks 5796

View Category: Coffee & Espresso Drinks

1

2

3

4

5

👍

Vote

👎

Vote

240 points

Comments [6]

Sugarfree Holiday syrups

Posted by pensacola23 to Coffee & Espresso Drinks, 11/5/2009 4:56 AM

How about offering sugarfree holiday syrups. If you cannot do all flavors, do at least 1.

👍

Vote

👎

Vote

Load your card for a free coffee!

Posted by YKKBUG to Coffee & Espresso Drinks, 6/11/2009 2:38 PM

When loading a card with \$25 or more - add the price of a tall brewed coffee to

A fragment of My Starbucks idea website. Available on URL: <http://mystarbucksidea.force.com/apex/ideaList?lsi=0&category=Coffee+%26+Espresso+Drinks>

## Appendix 6: The transcript of the interview with Nikolaj Hoencke Keldorff (23 November, 2009)

**The date of the interview:** 23 November, 2009  
**Location:** ASB  
**The length of the interview:** 55 min 29s  
**Interviewer:** Monika Garnyte  
**Interviewee:** Nikolaj Hoencke Keldorff  
**Referenced as:** (Keldorff, interview, November 23, 2009)

	Paragraph number
Monika Garnyte (MG): <i>At first, I will start with a question: can you introduce yourself? What are you doing at ASB?</i>	1
Nikolaj Keldorff (NK): That is a tough one. I have only been working here for 11 months, so it has not been quite a year yet. I was employed 1 <sup>st</sup> of December, last year. My job is to work as a project manager in new media and development of web-services. I have quite a broad range of work to do here. It is spanning from development of our web television channel (ASB CAST), and development of new formats and channels in television. I also work with our newsletters, development of our corporate website asb.dk, and, furthermore, with all these new media things.	2
MG: <i>But you are working with it from IT perspective, right?</i>	3
Yes. I work with it from IT perspective, but I have a Master's degree in Corporate Communication. So my role is to be the missing link between Communication department <sup>7</sup> and the Media department, web development <sup>8</sup> , and the IT department.	4
MG: <i>The first question for the interview would be: Social media has been a very trendy topic lately and ASB is, of course, influenced by it. Why do you think social media has become so important?</i>	5
NK: That is a tough question because there are some important drivers for the	6

<sup>7</sup> Communication and Development department.

<sup>8</sup> ASB Media.

medium to be important. At first, you have to have some critical mass, and you have to have some degree of culture that supports advertising for your covered identity to be able to be present at the medium. So that is quite logical that when we saw the rise of Facebook or LinkedIn – and now we have Twitter as the last one added to the group. They are very user driven. Thereby, there is no question that there is critical mass present at these mediums. So it's quite important that you at least consider whether you want to be present or you don't want to be present there. These are the places where the users go to everyday. If they go there every day, they would want to know whether you have the intention of being there or not being there, and why, or why not. So we have to clarify to our users why or why not we are present at their hubs of interest. So, I think, it is quite logical that you have to consider whether you want to be there or not.

With the rise of social media, it has become less and less expensive to communicate and interact with your peers and your stakeholders. However, it's not so much about whether it's expensive or not to advertise or to communicate – at least to the degree of expenses towards having advertising agencies that work out campaigns for you, or you have expenses for distributing your campaigns. It is all quite free now when we went digital. It's not so much a question about the expenses in “that department”, as it was with traditional media. But now it is a question about tutoring or getting to know these new tools of communication in the whole organization and consider how to allocate time.

*MG: What kind of challenges the social media platform brings to the school? How the school deals with that?*

NK: There are many challenges because it is a whole new way of communication. You know Facebook, you are, probably, on Facebook every day. As we, as product [development] people, Facebook, for instance, is driven by the culture of personal involvement. You have disconnected conversation with all of your friends and beloved ones. The rule of the corporate presence on these medias is up for a debate. And that debate is, first of all, between the professional communicators and organizations: we are trying to find a view and understand these new media [channels]. And most importantly, it is the debate between the organizations and the users of these social media websites. Facebook is owned by the users, so you have to acknowledge and respect the users and their point of view on your presence on that

media.

MG: *And it changes the whole communication process, right?..*

NK: Yes. Social media and the Internet give power to the user. Suddenly, one user can give you a great deal of pain towards that presence. So you have to respect that and that is the new way of thinking.

MG: *Does ASB have an official strategy for social media?*

NK: We are in the middle of creating one and I am trying to create a draft for our social media strategy, which will be an appendix to our communication strategy. I have just received a draft for our communication strategy, so right now we are just experimenting with social media.

You, of course, know ASB CAST, which is our web-TV platform. With ASB CAST we have Twitter account and we have Facebook page. And we are just about to restart on these. It's not put down on paper yet, but we have a strategy for using Twitter and Facebook for ASB CAST to update stakeholders every time we put up a new video.

So we are using it, we trying to experiment with it, collecting valuable information on how people want us to be present on different media. But it's a new world. It's a difficult world to grasp.

MG: *As you say, you are currently working with social media action plan for ASB. In general, what has encouraged ASB to get involved with social media?*

I think we have to separate two things. One thing is that I am in the middle of creating the draft of our social media strategy. And that is a strategy for being present at social media hubs. The other thing is that we are creating the social media action plan, which is a plan of action, a plan of how we want to interact and be present at the media. And most importantly, how we react and who reacts, if we receive bad press or some kind of rumours about the school.

One thing is our social media strategy, and the other one our action plan of listening in all the communication on the Internet, which channels do we want to listen and which words do we want to be notified about when they are mentioned. I am just

trying to get back to your question...

MG: *What encouraged...*

Yes, what encouraged... The social media strategy is important because social media is now affecting digital living and, maybe, you could be viewed as a digital native as well. I don't know where the age limit is goes, but when the whole world moved to social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, and so on), you now have the direct channel for communication with your users and stakeholders. So it would be foolish not to consider, at least, consider to what degree you want to be present in social media. But, on the other hand, we have the Internet. A lot of disconnected conversations are going on the Internet, and not only social media. So we have to be aware of how and what people are saying about us as organization, so we can, if needed, to be able to answer people, and to engage in conversation, because so much of conversation is carried out on the Internet. So it is logical, and necessary.

MG: *How ASB is making decisions on how and where to involve to on social media (like to go to Facebook or to Twitter, or...)?*

NK: It is a question of which users you want to engage on which topics.

So, for example, even my mother and father are already on Facebook. Facebook is becoming a hub of pretty much everybody using computer. Of course, you are also maybe experiencing a counter reaction on these social media websites and a small part of your friends or family are taking the action of not getting involved or do not want to be there. However, with the rise of Facebook, we have a direct channel of all possible and current students. And Facebook is great for engaging with possible new students and present students of the school. So we consider Facebook to be a communication channel with that group of stakeholders. Of course, when you leave ASB as a graduate, you, probably, if not already, will assign to a LinkedIn profile to manage your professional network. When you get out there and get your first job and interact in your corporate life, you want to keep the professional network with your peers. Therefore, LinkedIn is the other link with our stakeholders group, and LinkedIn is our channel to approach graduates, alumni.

MG: *So, do you choose social media application usually according to a stakeholder group you want to reach?*

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NK: Sometimes it would be on which group you want to communicate with, but could also be initiated on the topic of interest. I think, it's not so much of the question of whether you choose to consider the medium because of its users, but also could be of what you need to communicate. And I do not think we would settle on either or, but it will be a constant evaluation of what would be the right strategy to distribute or communicate *this* message or *this* topic, how we want to interact with our peers and users, and which medium, which channel would be the best for that. And, I think, with time we would not want to choose which channel to distribute, but we would consider how to form a message or topic, so it would be relevant to distribute in both channels. Of course, that would be evaluated from project to project. If we were able to create knowledge based in our organization how to use these channels, then it would make sense not to choose one over the other, but to consider both of them, and consider if we could be present on both channels. So we don't keep some users or stakeholder or users for getting in.

24

MG: *What are the goals for ASB to involve with social media? Every time you do some communicational or social media marketing initiative, you have to have a goal. So what are the goals for ASB?*

25

NK: From traditional marketing or communication perspective – before the Internet and social media campaigns, - it was more about choosing the right distribution channel, the right message for the right people, and segment, your target group. So they would get the right exposure towards the message. And that was – whether we would like it or not, - it was very much funded in transmission paradigm of communication. Maybe it was not created in the idea of transmission, but there were not a lot of ways for the users – the receivers of the message – to interact. And with the Internet and social media we have whole new range of possibilities towards interacting and engaging in the conversation with our peers. So our goal is to be able to facilitate conversation and engagement between our stakeholders and the school, and in-between the stakeholders themselves. If we get the conversation going between us and our users, then, first of all, we will have some loyalty from the users. It would make sense that whenever you are able to engage your users in conversation with you as an organization because they want to engage, they feel the need. So that would be a step forward towards facilitating loyalty for our user base. So our goal is to get loyalty and be able to facilitate loyalty, thereby, creating value for our school –

26

as an educational institution, and as a brand in the conscious of our alumni and in the corporate life in Denmark.

MG: *How the whole social media strategy fits the communication and marketing strategy of the school?*

27

NK: That is a bit difficult to answer right now because I have just received, as I told you, a draft of our communication strategy. So, I think, our social media strategy will be fitted towards our communication strategy. I think, our 2012 goal for the whole school is towards being top business school in the world, we have to be focused on becoming a lot more internationally acknowledged, and interact in international environment of schools and not so much in local environment of business schools. So, I think, it will be an international perspective of our strategy. And, I think, one of the other point of our strategy is towards facilitating sustainable innovation. So, I think, we would save on the need creating paper on traditional marketing because we have the opportunity to engage with our stakeholders on digital platforms, on social media websites and so on. I think we will try to create a social media strategy that supports our strategic goals towards our goal of 2012. But, as I said, I have just received the draft, so I cannot say specifically how we are going to do it.

28

MG: *We covered now the general part of social media. I would like to move to more specific things, to what ASB is actually doing with social media. Can you name the main social media activities the school is involved with?*

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NK: For two and a half years we have had a blogging platform, our own blogging platform, where you would be able as a student, or as a teacher, or as an employee of ASB to create your own blog. And that has been quite an interesting to have that kind of the platform. And some are using it right now. It is always difficult to engage users to create in such a platform because they have to feel the need. Part of the answer why we have not got enormous amount of active bloggers on [weblogs.asb.dk](http://weblogs.asb.dk) is [that] they have to feel the need of blogging in the context of ASB experience. And we haven't been able to communicate and to convince a lot of users that, first of all, we have this platform and the possibility of creating a weblog at that platform. But also that they have not been told or engaged into conversation, why they should be blogging on that platform, and not on the other platform somewhere on Blogspot or

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Wordpress blogging platforms. That is one initiative we have, and, I think, one of the first initiatives that ASB facilitated.

Furthermore, we have presence on Facebook, which is kind of sporadic at the moment and not that organized. And that is one of my goals to make some sense in our presence at different social media websites and be able to point out some convergence possibilities between these. Right now we have as official Facebook page, we have semi-official Facebook group, we have a fan page for the Library, and we have a fan page for ASB CAST, and we have a fan page on a way for a new portal of sustainable innovation. Furthermore, we have these user driven or user facilitated groups, pages on different study groups and so on.

So we have a lot of organizational pages, and we have some user pages as well. What we would want to do is to organize our organizational effort – on Facebook, and LinkedIn, and Twitter, and so on – to facilitate the convergence between these channels, and also to try to get a culture on this place for using and engaging our users on social media. That will take time, because a lot of our employees are not that accustomed to use this kind of communication. Maybe, they are private users as you and me, and we know the use of engagement on these media between users. But the rules of the presence and engagement from a corporate point of view are not that clear right at the moment.

MG: *So the aim would be to coordinate these all different activities, and to...?*

NK: At least to have some kind of view on how we do it and do things on the sites. And that we have organized way of listening. So when some students or some former students would want to know where you can get some kind of [information], apartment in the city, and when they post a question in these groups – whether it is our official group or user driven group, - we want to be present to and try to catch these questions.

MG: *Can you name which channel, initiative is the most important for the school?*

NK: I think, the first most important initiative right now would be our presence at Facebook, but that is from my point of view. As you write in your questions, you are aware that ASB Alumni has just created their platform ASB Connect. So from the Alumni perspective, Connect is the most important platform. And that, of course, is

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very important channel as well. And that is an independent initiative, it is their own platform. So from Alumni perspective, it is quite important that we try to move graduates into assigning a profile on Connect. But, I think, our Facebook presence is one of the most important ones right at the moment.

MG: *Can you tell a bit more about ASB CAST?*

NK: ASB CAST is our new answer to how to make educational television and, of course, we consider ASB CAST as brand [branding] initiative. So it is an initiative that it is aimed towards creating a brand value and awareness for all stakeholder levels. But we have been working with ASB CAST for 10-11 months at the moment. We have just been launching version 2 of ASB CAST on a new software platform that we have been able to develop ourselves. ASB CAST is going to become a platform of all media created by ASB – both lectures videos and podcast presentations, and these specifically produced web-TV presentations as you [can] see at ASB CAST today. And ASB CAST is considered to be a new kind of media hub for ASB. We have been just road-mapping the development for the next 2-3-4 versions of ASB CAST. It is going to be distributional platform for all media on this site, so that our current students and post-graduates are able to feeding on specific courses or tags of interest that could be a name of a favourite professor or so on. It is an initiative that is considered to be the brand [branding] channel from the communication perspective.

MG: *Can you name the most successful and the least successful initiative so far on social media?*

NK: The least successful is clearly ASB you. If you...

MG: *I've heard about it...*

NK: Well, ASB you was a mistake in the way that it was an idea of trying to create a competitor to Facebook, just around ASB student network. And you cannot make students create and utilize ASB you just to communicate with other students, and maybe getting some information from the organization behind because all of the students are already communicating with each other on Facebook. So it was a failure in that sense that there were no strong enough argument to make students to move to ASB you and make ASB you a part of their daily life on social media because it was

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not considered a valuable alternative to Facebook.

MG: *ASBYou was aimed at present students not for alumni, because alumni also had something related with ASB you, and then they moved to Connect, right?*

NK: Yes

MG: *But it is not exactly the same initiative...*

NK: No. ASB Connect is to be considered as more valuable hub of interests between these post-graduates because they have a reason to be there. Present students had not have the reason to be on ASB Alumni [should be ASBYou] because there were not anything, at least from their point of view, valuable for them to find on ASBYou that they could not find through Facebook. So ASBYou was a failure in that sense. And ASB Connect is the platform that connected all of the alumni from ASB. And that is the value of ASB Connect. Furthermore, the team behind the alumni network Connect is very good at creating the valuable content and interactions between the alumni from ASB. So Connect platform has had and has now a lot of value of ASB alumni.

MG: *Don't you think that if ASBYou was a competition for Facebook, Connect would be a competition for LinkedIn?*

NK: Not in that way. I think there are no the tools needed to be able to separate your alumni network of ASB in LinkedIn at this current time. So, I think, that value of ASB Connect is regarded high enough of the users that they want to use this platform, as well as using Facebook or LinkedIn profile. So, I think, there is enough value in the sense that you are connected to your past alumni of ASB, so they want to use the Connect platform. And, I think, it is a way of separating at least that is an assumption of mine, when you are an alumni of ASB, it is a way of separating your professional peered network from your corporate stands at the moment you have on your LinkedIn profile. Maybe, you are connected to some of your peers of present ASB students, who will be graduates, but there is also a lot of value of being a part of a large network of ASB Alumni because they have their ASB pasts, they have that in common, and they are using it to facilitate the involvement between each other.

MG: *What would be the most successful initiative?*

NK: I think, if you asked our communication director, she would say that ASB Alumni has been quite successful in their initiatives. And, I think, I hope, that we will experience some further success with ASB CAST. Because we are, in fact, seeing that our external partners that use ASB CAST are quite happy about it as a brand [branding] channel, and as a brand value of ASB on all stakeholder levels. ASB CAST has shown that it has high degree of value towards our stakeholders. I think, ASB CAST will be, I hope it will be quite successful. That is also on my part that is partly because I am a project manager of ASB CAST.

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I think our blogs were, if we measure it on user experience, I think our blogs are not extraordinary successful but, I think, it is valuable that we have created a platform of ASB blogs around ASB.

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So, I think, I would say that the most successful would be Alumni network.

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MG: *Do we still have a bit more time?*

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NK: Yes

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MG: *Well, the other part will be shortly about the future. But, at first, I would like to ask, was there a fear of criticism before going to social media? Social media is the platform where everything is open. People, actually, are pretty willing to criticize, especially corporations that are present online. What about ASB? Weren't they afraid of that before going?*

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NK: I think every organization that has been using social media will be afraid to some degree of interacting in the direct conversation between and with their peers. So, in organizations like ASB you have to have a lot of administrative staff that has not got that much of the feeling with social media rules or rules of the conversation. So it is the whole new communication paradigm arising. It is a new, as you say, the possibility of direct conversation between organizations and their peers and in between peers around the organization. So the organization has a new reality to face, and that is the reality of active user conversation, and the possibility, as you say, of direct criticism. I think, ASB as an organization has a lot to learn, and we have to mature in our communication, and in a way of communicating before we will master these new media.

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MG: *Basically, ASB would encourage criticism in order to learn something out of it then. Do you have a strategy how to respond to it?*

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NK: I think, with the rise of social media we have to acknowledge both the risk and the possibility of getting user feedback, whether it is positive or negative. And, I think, we have a lot of willingness towards engaging in that kind of valuable conversation, whether it would be critique or positive feedback. But that is not to say that we would [encourage]. We have to re-evaluate our culture of being, let's not say afraid but for some people and some part of organization it is a new world that they would be able to – whether they want to or not – to have criticism right in their faces and the users demand something from them. That is a new way of interacting with your peers. So, I think, we have the willingness to interact to some degree, but to say that we are so mature that would be able to handle it all, that would be to “*take my mouth too full*”.

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MG: *We've already talked that the school would like to exploit Facebook more, and ASB CAST is a new channel where you have a lot of hopes. What are other future plans with social media?*

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NK: I have said that Facebook is, probably, our first level of involvement to be able to make some convergence on our presence of Facebook. But right now on the tip of that, it would be creating our presence at LinkedIn as well. Because as an organization we see these two network as the most important hubs. We have the largest amounts of users on these two networks. And LinkedIn is very much about to become - or having “the second wind” – because of Facebook. I think, a lot of research has said that LinkedIn was too pre-mature for the world at that time when it was created. With Facebook people have been educated on how to be present and how to interact on social media. Thereby, LinkedIn has gained this “second wind”. The level of users present at LinkedIn is constantly rising right now. So LinkedIn will be our “second leg” on our social media presence.

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MG: *What about Twitter, for instance, or YouTube?*

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NK: We are present at YouTube. ASB CAST has a channel at YouTube as well. So we have kind of a bridge between ASB CAST and its user on the YouTube channel. We will want to be present at all the hubs of media and conversational interaction on

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the Internet to the extent that we find it to be valuable towards our goals of communication and interaction. And let's just say that we need to assess whether we have critical mass on these media or not.

MG: *And two more questions. What kind of user you have in mind when getting involved with social media? Usually you think about students – present, prospect, alumni...*

NK: ...but also very much our stakeholders – corporate organizations as well, and other educational organizations. So ASB CAST is very much aimed towards creating a value for the brand towards external stakeholders and, secondly, of course, towards internal stakeholders. So it is not to say that we do not acknowledge the fact that we have other stakeholders then present [students] or postgraduates. I think we consider them all to be important.

MG: *What [kind of their] needs would you like to address when you go to social media?*

NK: That is a very difficult question to answer because the needs could arise from different places in the organization that possible students would like to learn about, how present students have experienced or are experiencing [ASB], how to attend ASB, they want to know how the city forms the whole culture around the school. They would also want to know how the post-graduates, the alumni, are considering the educational value, how they had been able to get work after studying in this place.

So, social media is important for many communicational purposes. Some of it is in towards addressing questions from possible students, and some of it would be interacting with present students and giving them some channels, whether this will be heard by organization, the interaction would be a lot more smooth and convenient. Our post-graduates, the alumni group, would want to keep up with the new research, knowledge from ASB, so that is a *pro* of ASB CAST, where we distribute our knowledge. So we regard all these media as channels of possible messages and demands of the users. And they are a lot more convenient both for us as an organization, but also for the users. So '*convenience is a king*'.

MG: *And the last question which I missed before would be: ASB has a lot of different*

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*initiatives from different divisions like the Career centre, Alumni, even SL– they could be counted as well. Are you trying to coordinate it somehow or those different divisions are on their own and they do just what they have in mind?*

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NK: I think, with my position as project manager and an aggregator of social media effort, we would try to coordinate our effort of social media in future, and our draft on our social media strategy will want to facilitate that to some extent. But that is not to say that we want to control and tighten up our divisions in their use of the channels. A lot of the times, if not all of the times, it is the divisions, which are in direct contact somehow with their users and peers. So they know which channels they would want to use and their users would want them to use. So, I think, I am considering our strategy more as a kind of guideline strategy, and attempt to aggregate our efforts. So they will be able to get help and insights on how to use different media, and not so much about them being controlled by centralised division.

Of course, we would want to know which groups and how they interact with their peers, but that is not to say that we want to control.

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MG: *Well, I am done with my questions, would like to add something?*

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NK: I don't think I have...

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## **Appendix 7: ASB related documents**

- 1) ASB news (2 November, 2006)**
- 2) Aarhus University news (6 November, 2006)**
- 3) ASB strategy**
- 4) ASB facts and figures**
- 5) Welcome brochure**



## 1) ASB news (2 November, 2006)

**Document:** news article for the archives

**Title:** Aarhus School of Business says yes to merger

**Author:** ASB

**Source:** ASB.dk ([www.asb.dk](http://www.asb.dk))

**Published:** 2 November, 2006

**Available at:** <http://www.asb.dk/news.aspx?pid=16479&focus=13027&year=2006>

**Referenced as:** (Aarhus School of Business, 2006)

**Retrieved:** 11 November 2009

### **Aarhus School of Business says yes to merger [2 November, 2006]**

*The merger with the University of Aarhus means more money for business research, even better opportunities for students and considerable growth potential for the business community.*

The Board of Aarhus School of Business (ASB) has today approved a merger with the University of Aarhus. ASB will thus become a part of the new University of Aarhus together with the Danish National Environmental Research Institute and the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences.

- Our conditions have been met, and we are therefore very happy to sign the merger contract with the University of Aarhus. The merger will have a large impact for both our employees, students and the Danish business community. The merger provides us with a completely new range of options for utilising the ASB competences and for speeding up the positive development we are currently seeing. Together with our new partners in the new University of Aarhus, we will internationally rank among the very best, says Erik Højsholt, Chairman of the Board of ASB.

The merger with the University of Aarhus is based on three conditions:

- ASB becomes the Business School of the new University of Aarhus (in the form of a so-called “professional school”) and will thus be able to keep its strong brand and close ties to the business community.
- The Danish Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Helge Sander, has stated that he will propose an amendment to the Danish University Act, so that it will also comprise “professional schools”. This will, among other things, provide the framework for establishing a number of similar schools in the future.
- As part of the merger agreement, the basic appropriation for research will be increased. The merger makes it possible to partially finance this via a sale of the ASB buildings to the state.

This sale is subject to approval from the Finance Committee. More resources for research will at the same time strengthen the study programmes.

The new, improved framework conditions will enable ASB to boost commercial research, and ASB will therefore be appointing new employees. The aim is to advertise 15 new PhD positions by Christmas.

ASB will at the same time provide the new University of Aarhus with new opportunities for strengthening and extending relations between Danish research and the business community and supplying more business-oriented and innovative employees for trade and industry.

- The merger with the University of Aarhus includes many exciting perspectives for our employees and new opportunities and challenges for our dynamic research environment. The merger will also provide new ways of developing our study programmes via more interdisciplinary collaboration at the new university. In addition, it is important that we maintain our position as a business school and thus our strong profile within business research and education, both nationally and internationally, says Associate Professor Ole Hagh, shop steward at ASB, and adds:

- I am very happy to see that our working conditions will not deteriorate, but that, on the contrary, we are being given the opportunity to take on new challenges and contribute to furthering ASB's positive development.

- For our students, the merger will provide many new and exciting perspectives in the form of, for example, access to a number of totally new research-based subjects and study programmes. At the same time, we hope that the construction of new buildings can now get underway, says Thomas Ommen, student and member of the Board of ASB.

> Please send any questions to or comments on the merger between ASB and the University of Aarhus to [fusion@asb.dk](mailto:fusion@asb.dk)

### **Further information**

Erik Højsholt, Chairman

Tel. +45 20 10 65 80

## 2) Aarhus University news (6 November, 2006)

**Document:** news article for the archives  
**Title:** A new, larger University of Aarhus takes shape  
**Author:** Aarhus University  
**Source:** ASB.dk ([www.asb.dk](http://www.asb.dk))  
**Published:** 6 November, 2006  
**Available at:** <http://www.au.dk/en/news/archive/061106>  
**Referenced as:** (Aarhus University, 2006)  
**Retrieved:** 11 November 2009

### A new, larger University of Aarhus takes shape [6 November, 2006]

*Four institutions become one new University of Aarhus*

On 1 January 2007, the Aarhus School of Business (ASB), the Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences (DIAS) and the Danish National Environmental Research Institute (NERI) will amalgamate with the University of Aarhus. The boards of these institutions have now approved the amalgamation, so the decision is clear. Plans to amalgamate DIAS and NERI with the University of Aarhus were resolved some time ago, and the agreement with ASB has now fallen into place as well.

“This is a good day for both the University of Aarhus and for Denmark,” says Mr Jens Bigum, Chairman of the University Board. “Our negotiations with the institutions and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation have been both positive and constructive, and I feel we have achieved a very strong result. I’m pleased that we’ve managed to concentrate significant elements of Danish agricultural and environmental research at the University of Aarhus, and I’m happy that the Aarhus School of Business – with its major strength in the commercial area and its comprehensive, well-developed collaboration with the business community – will also be part of the new university. This new research hub will really enable Denmark to meet the global challenges we are facing, and the new University of Aarhus will play a distinctive role in the university world – both in Denmark and abroad.”

Rector Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen is also pleased and says, “Now we’re looking forward to making a start on setting up the best framework for good, constructive collaboration involving all the present institutions. The amalgamation process must be a success in order to enable the new University of Aarhus to make its mark among the very best. And this means that staff members at all levels of the organisations must be involved in the process.”

A feature of the new University of Aarhus will be the combination of the university's extensive, internationally recognised research capacity and significant attraction for students, ASB's high-profile commercial positions, the nature and environment research facilities at NERI and the strategic, application-oriented experimental research and innovation environments at DIAS. This combination establishes a common basis for partnership between the new University of Aarhus, the innovative business community, and public authorities in Denmark and abroad. The new University of Aarhus will be able to utilise such an amalgamation to make a significant contribution to Denmark's ability to develop and become one of the leading knowledge societies in the world.

### **Composition of the new Board**

As of 2007, the new Board will include representatives from all four institutions.

### **Day-to-day management at the new University of Aarhus**

The day-to-day management of the new University of Aarhus will consist of Rector Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen, Pro-rector Katherine Richardson and Director Stig Møller, while Børge Obel (current Rector of ASB) will be Dean of the Aarhus School of Business, the University of Aarhus; Just Jensen (current Rector of DIAS) will be Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural Science; and Henrik Sandbech will remain Director General of the Danish National Environmental Research Institute – added to which are the deans of the university's current five faculties: Dean Bodil Due, the Faculty of Humanities; Dean Søren Mogensen, the Faculty of Health Sciences; Dean Svend Hylleberg, the Faculty of Social Sciences; Dean Carsten Riis, the Faculty of Theology; and Dean Erik Meineche Schmidt, the Faculty of Science.

### **More information**

Further details are available from

Jens Bigum, Chairman of the Board, the University of Aarhus, tel +45 8942 1132 / 2014 4155, [jbi@adm.au.dk](mailto:jbi@adm.au.dk)

Lauritz B. Holm-Nielsen, Rector, the University of Aarhus, tel +45 8942 1141 / 2899 2584, [rektor@au.dk](mailto:rektor@au.dk)

### **Facts about the new University of Aarhus**

The new University of Aarhus will be an international, effective centre for education and knowledge, with a staff amounting to approximately 5,700 (full-time equivalent), and with a

capacity for educating about 30,000 students and 2,000 PhD students. The new University of Aarhus will provide research of the highest international quality of a volume the equivalent of approximately 25% of the total public research carried out in Denmark.

DIAS will be given a position as a faculty at the new University of Aarhus. ASB will become a professional school at the same level as a faculty. ASB's special title of business school will remain and be further strengthened. NERI will be placed as a new National Institute for the Environment.

### **Facts about the four organisations**

**The University of Aarhus** makes a major research impact within a wide range of subject areas and is positioned among the best in international rankings. The university features a comprehensive PhD programme at a high academic level. The University of Aarhus is Denmark's second-largest educational establishment, with approximately 22,000 students, about 3,700 members of staff (full-time equivalent) and a turnover of approximately DKK 2.5 billion.

**The Aarhus School of Business** features an internationally attractive research and education environment in the area of commerce, and has a highly reputable, extensive collaboration with the Danish business community. With its approximately 7,000 students, the Aarhus School of Business is currently in a strong position as the sixth-largest accredited business school in Europe. ASB has about 560 members of staff (full-time equivalent) and a turnover of approximately DKK 350 million.

**The Danish National Environmental Research Institute** has an internationally recognised capacity for strategic research, monitoring and consultancy services, with a clear aim to provide support for the public authorities. NERI has about 420 members of staff (full-time equivalent) and a turnover of approximately DKK 250 million. NERI has departments at three locations in Denmark, with its headquarters in Roskilde.

**The Danish Institute of Agricultural Sciences** has a well-established, recognised capacity – both in Denmark and abroad – for basic, strategic and application-oriented experimental research and innovation with a clear business-related target. DIAS has about 900 members of staff (full-time equivalent) and a turnover of approximately DKK 580 million. DIAS has departments at six locations in Denmark, with its headquarters in Foulum.

2 November 2006

Anders Frølund

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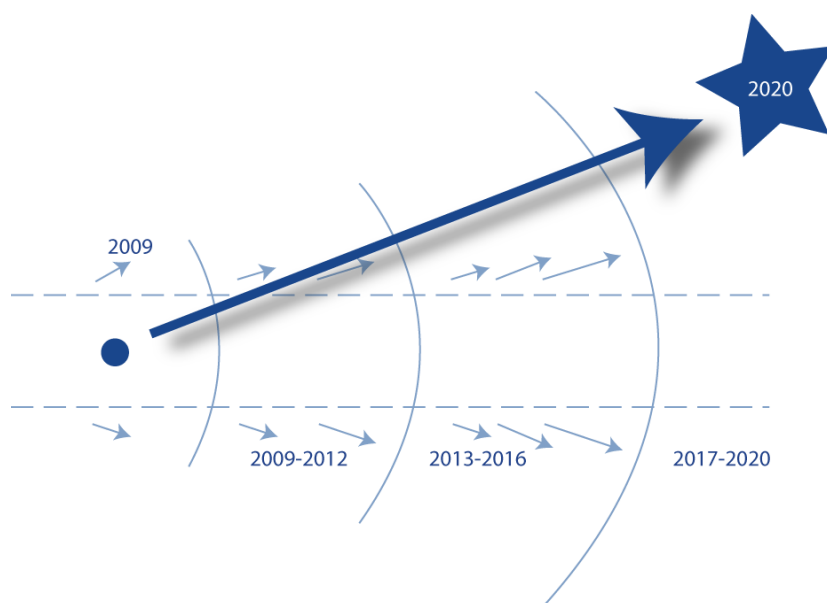
Communication Office



# ASB STRATEGY

2009-2012

AARHUS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, AARHUS UNIVERSITY  
JULY 2009



AARHUS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS  
AARHUS UNIVERSITY

# ASB STRATEGY 2009-2012

## 1. Introduction

In the course of the latest strategy period (2006-2009), Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University (ASB) saw significant growth and change. All scientific and administrative employees at ASB have delivered strong results and made a positive contribution to fulfilling the strategy in the form of research, teaching and collaboration with the business community, organisations and society. This is a very satisfactory development which illustrates how ASB is, in every way, an institution characterised by high international standards and which makes a clear contribution to society by conducting high-quality research, offering popular study programmes and producing talented students and graduates, maintaining an active dialogue with businesses and society in general, and being an attractive and inspiring workplace.

ASB's Strategy 2009-2012 builds on the excellent results that we achieved during the most recent period of growth and change, and which are deeply rooted in the entire 70-year history of ASB.

### En route to 2020

The long-term aim of the strategy process is for ASB, before year-end 2020, to be known by businesses and organisations as well as by potential students and researchers – both nationally and internationally – as *one of the leading business schools in the world* in terms of both its research and its study programmes.

The strategy for 2009-2012 means that ASB will continue to work towards its vision for 2020, increasing the level of strategic ambition based on the solid foundations created during the most recent strategy period.

The strategic ambition for the coming strategy period is to become a leading international business school. This is a natural ambition for a business school which is part of Aarhus University, an international top-100 university seeing strong growth.

For each strategy period up until 2020, we will direct our focus at a particular theme which will take us to the forefront of current development trends and allow us to meet the needs of the business community through interdisciplinary and external research and educational activities with a strong academic foundation within the relevant thematic focus area. The intention is for the theme, during the strategy period, to provide a new outlook and ensure a change in attitude which will take us forward and become an integrated part of our mindset.

One example worthy of mention is that 'integrated internationalisation' was a central theme in the latest strategy period. This has resulted in a giant leap forwards in terms of the degree of internationalisation at virtually all levels, which means that the internationalisation aspect has today become an integrated part of our fundamental thinking about ASB and the activities which we are planning and involving ourselves in.

In the coming strategy period, our special focus will be on the theme *sustainable growth through innovation*.



## 2. ASB's mission and vision

Strategy 2009-2012 stakes out the direction of ASB's development towards fulfilling its vision for 2020. The starting point is ASB's mission and vision, while more specific targets and efforts are described in the action plans related to the strategy.

### **Mission**

*Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University contributes added value to society through research, education and dialogue on companies and organisations and their surroundings.*

*Together with the rest of Aarhus University, we develop knowledge, welfare and culture through research and research-based education, dissemination and consulting.*

### **Vision**

*ASB wants to be a leading international business school.*

*ASB will develop and transform knowledge and ideas, that create sustainable growth through innovation for the benefit of students, companies, organisations and society.*

### **2.1 A leading international business school**

At the start of the strategy period, ASB already enjoys international recognition. We collaborate with strong international partners, our study programmes are sought by large numbers of foreign students, and we are able to attract many international employees and visiting researchers.

With the new level of strategic ambition, ASB will continue and further develop its successful internationalisation process, focusing on expanding our international networks and the nature of our strategic collaboration with a selected group of business schools at a high international level, among other things through membership of Coimbra, PRME, Global Compact, AACSB and other relevant fora. We want to highlight the fact that we enjoy a strong position compared with other leading business schools, among other things through our particular focus on *sustainable growth through innovation*.

ASB wants to be a leading research and educational institution generating research of the highest international standard and publishing articles in the most prestigious journals. During the strategy period, we will focus even more sharply on research quality rather than research quantity, and our research centres will continue to contribute frontline research of the highest international standard. We want to be an attractive partner and

supplier to the international business community and to the global community in general.

We want to offer a broad portfolio of nationally and internationally attractive study programmes based on strong research, while increasingly attracting and admitting applicants of a high standing.

### **2.2 Indications that ASB fulfils its strategic ambitions**

For ASB to reach a level as a leading international business school by year-end 2012, we have, among other things, met the following overall objectives:

- We will be one of the few business schools in the world to have achieved triple-crown accreditation, i.e. EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA accreditation.
- We will engage in systematic benchmarking with a view to developing quality and efficiency in collaboration with a relevant portfolio of leading international business schools. The portfolio will form the basis for establishing strategic collaboration with one or more partners.
- We will be among the top 50 in one or more business school rankings in Europe or in similar relevant rankings covering education and/or research.
- We will establish an interdisciplinary theme within sustainable growth through innovation which creates relevant world-class research across ASB's departments and centres.
- We will create strong national and international business partnerships.

### 3. Coherent and sustainable activities

A central element in ASB's strategy for the period is sustainability in research and education. Each of these areas must be strengthened and developed through setting targets and formulating strategies which are directed, to a special degree, at the primary stakeholders within each area: the international research community, coming and present students, businesses, organisations and other stakeholders.

We will do this by unfolding the concept which we call *New Business Classic*. New Business Classic involves developing our classic mercantile skills to include appurtenant competencies and the special theme for the individual strategy periods. Up until 2012, 'New' will thus, among other things, consist in focusing on sustainable growth through innovation. We will renew the classic business school through research projects both internally at ASB and in collaboration with the rest of Aarhus University and international collaboration partners. We will give priority to projects which strengthen our relations with the business community, for example co-financed research, industrial PhDs and continuing and further educational activities.

Our activities create sustainable growth both for ourselves and for our stakeholders. The starting point for all the activities is our good employees, our physical resources, our organisation and our way of doing things – our culture and processes as part of Aarhus University.

All the elements hang together and are mutually dependent. A large share of the value and hallmark of ASB depends on the interaction of the various elements. Research is key to the study programmes through the students' encounter with both high-level academic competencies and research-based thinking. New technological opportunities and innovation underpin the interaction between all the various activities, and new financially and ethically sustainable solutions emerge. Dialogue is key as concerns the development of the study programmes, contact with the outside world during the studies and in the transition from the university to the first job. Finally, our physical framework, human resources and the way in which we work impact all activities and therefore form an important and integrated part of ASB's overall strategy.

#### 3.1. Interdisciplinary theme on sustainable growth through innovation

As part of our efforts to support and develop the interaction, we will work in a targeted fashion with an interdisciplinary theme on sustainable growth through innovation. The theme must drive innovation and act as a catalyst for the strategy, among

other things in the form of the co-financing of research projects in collaboration between ASB's centres and departments, the undertaking of knowledge dissemination and the supporting of educational activities.

The theme must underpin the national strategy of Denmark being a leading nation within green growth and responsible management. It must underpin the commercial potential in working in a targeted fashion with sustainable solutions, for example within special sectors such as energy and the environment.

However, the thematic focus is not limited to these sectors as sustainable solutions are also integrated in many other processes in a company or in an organisation, for example logistics, organic production and green marketing, microeconomic and macroeconomic processes, sustainable cost-benefit, responsible investment, value-based management, international communication, knowledge management, corporate governance, auditing, environmental law and business law, globalisation and the organisation of global businesses, labour market and integration, CSR, green communication, the handling of rights etc., for example based on knowledge about markets, and their socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural characteristics.

Innovation is a central element in the thematic activities, including the development of new business models for the energy and environmental sector, intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, user-driven innovation etc.

The theme must be developed into a national fulcrum and network for sustainable business development and innovation bringing together businesses, researchers and public authorities. It will be a central element in strategic research projects, for example financed by the Danish Council for Strategic Research.

As part of the work on the theme, ASB must enter into strategic partnerships on research projects concerning sustainable growth and the commercial exploitation of green technology with a number of nationally and internationally leading businesses and organisations which are active within this area. We will be a pivot for the establishment of international collaboration in relation to sustainable investments.

The thematic activities undertaken during the strategy period must contribute to the preparation of a report for 'The Principles for Responsible Management Education' (PRME) in the UN in accordance with the principles of sustainability and corporate responsibility.

## 4. Research

During the most recent strategy period, the quality of our research production has been strengthened. There has been a marked increase in the number of research publications, in particular the number of peer-reviewed articles. So far, a total of ten research centres have been set up within ASB's strongest research areas, contributing frontline research at the highest international level.

### 4.1. Vision

ASB wants to become a leading international business school which is recognised internationally for its excellent and innovation research into businesses and other organisations and their surroundings. By fulfilling this objective we will contribute to realising Aarhus University's vision of being a leading international university.

We want to provide groundbreaking research into the challenges and the complexity facing businesses and organisations at the beginning of the twenty-first century with particular focus on the theme of sustainable growth through innovation. To achieve this, ASB must take as its starting point its sound and solid theoretical and methodological foundation so as to encourage innovative research, also across specialist academic fields, and ensure a strong research base for our broad portfolio of study programmes.

We will produce research which both satisfies the demand for academic expertise and is of strategic importance to users. It is important that the research results generated are relevant to businesses and other stakeholders, and that the research results are also communicated to a broader audience. This is done through PR and continuing educational activities, via the research@asb portal and through research partnerships with non-academic partners and through the strict observance of academic criteria for quality and stringency. *In other words, ASB must strive for the highest academic quality and at the same time demonstrate relevance for private and public stakeholders.*

### 4.2. Research objectives

ASB's research strategy has four objectives:

**1) Innovative and groundbreaking research at the highest international level. Good research is the foundation for everything else.**

**2) Increased participation in projects which can contribute to promoting interdisciplinary and international collaboration.**

**3) Research of relevance and topicality which is communicated to the business community and other relevant parties. Research activities within sustainable growth through innovation will contribute to achieving this object and strengthen ASB's profile.**

**4) Development of academic talents and competencies.**

### 4.3. How will ASB achieve these objectives?

- **A lively research environment**

ASB will encourage innovation, collaboration and dialogue across academic and organisational barriers without compromising the academic freedom of individual researchers. We will acknowledge methodological and theoretical diversity, ensure access to international research environments and facilitate the exchange of ideas and collaboration within and between departments and units.

- **Academic performance criteria**

ASB wants clear criteria for academic quality and career progression. The criteria must take account of academic diversity, and they must accommodate a future bibliometric indicator model. The criteria must allow benchmarking with international business schools.

- **External financing**

We have maintained or increased our market share of research funding and other forms of external financing which – in a fast-growing market – implies a considerable increase in the total amount of external funding obtained.

- **Administrative support**

Research staff must live up to increasing requirements. This is not least attributable to the fact that the generation of external research funding will be given a high priority in the coming years. We will provide the best possible administrative support for ASB's research staff, for example in connection with applications for research funds and reporting.

- **High-quality research a priority**

ASB will prioritise resources for the most active research groups. The research centres will continue to be of decisive importance to frontline research at ASB, and the research centre portfolio will undergo continuous assessment. The contracts with the existing centres will be extended if they meet their targets and continue to develop, and we will support forward-looking fields of research in their endeavours to be granted centre status.

ASB will fund research initiatives which support our theme of sustainable growth through innovation.

ASB will support research-based initiatives which promote collaboration with non-academic partners.

Financial buffers must be created which make it possible for departments to invest their research funding strategically, and a financing model will be developed which encourages the external financing of PhDs and postdocs.

- **Targeted development of promising young talent**

ASB will continue to work to ensure the first-class training of researchers. The graduate school and the various research training programmes must offer high-quality courses in academic method in the early phases of the PhD programme. Senior researchers must also be given the opportunity of developing their skills, also with regard to research management.

We want to increase the number of PhD students and develop the use of the master-class system, preferably in collaboration with other parts of Aarhus University. We want all priority research fields to take an active part in a research training programme.

We want to work to ensure that PhDs trained at ASB find the most attractive jobs, for example at the best international business schools.

- **Internationalisation**

We want to ensure at all times that ASB's research is represented in the best international peer-reviewed journals and other similar relevant media. We will achieve this, among other things, through joint publications with international top researchers, and ASB's researchers must increasingly take part in research projects with international top researchers.

We will maintain the high number of international visiting professors and participate in and organise international conferences. We will develop an ambitious visiting programme for all departments. Through international recruitment we will attract the best talents by scouring networks, using all communication channels and being present at conferences and other networking events.

We will use the technological possibilities available to develop international contacts. For example, virtual assessment committees will make it possible for internationally acknowledged top researchers to be represented on the PhD assessment committees.

#### 4.4. Tasks

Below is a list of the tasks which must be undertaken to realise the research targets:

- Identifying the scope for creating a working environment which fosters innovation and creativity.
- Finalising a qualifications framework and pay incentive system.
- Comparing the research quality criteria and the bibliometric authority lists with a view to ensuring coherence.
- Finalising an international benchmarking system for research.
- Reviewing the administrative support and the competencies and resources of the administrative staff.
- Developing research support functions (central and local).
- Evaluating the research centres prior to expiry of centre contracts.
- Developing a financing system for PhD fellowships which makes it possible to mix the university's financing with external grants.
- Developing information material for visiting professors.
- Focus on the targeted dissemination of research results, both nationally and internationally.

The tasks are described in greater detail in the action plans related to the strategy.

## 5. Education

ASB educates tomorrow's leaders and specialists within the mercantile profession. As an EQUIS-accredited business school, ASB therefore offers a broad portfolio of full-time and part-time high-quality and research-based study programmes. The study programmes are strongly research-based and with a natural progression, while also being characterised by a highly flexible programme structure and course offering focused on the students' background and on life-long learning. A majority of the MA/MSc study programmes are offered in English, while most of the BA/BSc programmes are taught in Danish. Developments in recent years have resulted in a flexible, robust and transparent structure, and we have implemented and constantly validate the competencies developed and the descriptions of objectives in relation to our portfolio of study programmes. These developments are in line with the Bologna process, and we have now been awarded an ECTS label. This provides us with a solid foundation for further developments. According to feedback from both graduates and prospective employers, ASB delivers high-quality and relevant education.

### 5.1 Vision

ASB will continue to offer and develop attractive and business-oriented full-time and part-time study programmes at a high level. The study programmes will be attractive both nationally and internationally and will benefit students, businesses, organisations and society. Particular focus will be on the theme of sustainable growth through innovation, including the development of study programmes and programmes with the relevant tonings within the theme.

### 5.2 Objectives for the educational area

In the strategy period, ASB will work with the following objectives for the educational area:

#### **1) Maintain and develop the broad portfolio of strongly research-based study programmes at BA/BSc and MA/MSc level and with relevant tonings within the theme of sustainable growth through innovation**

The broad academic base of the study programmes will be maintained. At the same time the relevance of the portfolio of study programmes will be ensured at all times through interaction with the relevant research environments and the possible tonings so that the portfolio is developed based on the theme of sustainable growth through innovation. We will create clear criteria and processes for establishing new study programmes at ASB.

#### **2) Qualitative growth in the day-time study programmes**

ASB will attract more applicants of a particularly high quality for both our BA/BSc and our MA/MSc programmes. In admitting applicants to the MA/MSc programmes, we will endeavour to ensure an equal distribution between our own BA/BSc students and BA/BSc students from other institutions, including a significant share of international students. The number of students admitted to the day-time programmes will be unchanged.

#### **3) Growth in learning and IT support**

ASB will create qualitative growth in learning and opportunities for learning on the various study programmes with IT as a supporting factor of which we will increasingly avail ourselves.

#### **4) IT as a competency**

Within all our academic disciplines, we educate students to master state-of-the-art IT systems and IT tools, making the necessary resources available.

#### **5) Good career prospects – also for international MA/MSc students**

ASB will ensure good career opportunities for international MA/MSc students.

#### **6) Growth in continuing and further educational activities**

ASB will expand its portfolio of activities and be an attractive provider of continuing and further educational activities for the Danish and international business community. We want to attract new groups of applicants, more high-quality applicants and applicants who are willing to pay for quality.

#### **7) Life-long learning**

It is important to think of education as life-long learning. This means, among other things, that the entire field of continuing and further educational activities must be coordinated with, for example, our alumni to a greater extent.

### 5.3 How will ASB achieve these objectives?

#### DAY-TIME STUDY PROGRAMMES

##### • **Application and admission**

ASB will attract more high-quality applicants to both its BA/BSc and MA/MSc study programmes. The introduction of a screening procedure, for example the GMAT system, is being investigated as a possibility in relation to foreign students. Moreover, we will quality-assure our admission system in relation to relevant business academy programmes. Also, we will offer more our guidance to applicants with particular focus on upper secondary schools.



- **Learning processes**

ASB will develop 'the multi-cultural learning room' and the multi-cultural business school and encourage the development of digital learning rooms and the relevant pedagogics and didactics, including working with learning styles. IT must be an integrated part of teaching activities and exams where relevant and possible, and research environments which can provide input must be approached. There will also be a stronger focus on pedagogical and didactic support and development for all lecturers and on supportive pedagogical initiatives in relation to students. We will develop and introduce integrated and flexible courses/workshops based on the ASB Library's expert knowledge about the use of information sources and insight into the interplay between searches and the subsequent handling and use of information in learning processes, the acquisition of knowledge and knowledge construction.

- **Teaching content and objectives**

The theme of sustainable growth through innovation is tailored where and in the form which is relevant, for example by establishing new study programmes such as the BSc in Business Administration and Sustainability and the BSc in Business Administration, Business Law and the Environment, and the research potential at Aarhus University as a whole is utilised to a greater extent for the purpose innovating new academic disciplines. Within a number of specially selected areas at MA/MSc level, the elitist dimension will be given a higher priority.

- **Evaluation of teaching activities**

The results of the ongoing evaluations of teaching activities and graduate surveys and the alumni database are used actively to develop our study programmes.

- **Study environment**

There will be a constant focus on maintaining and further developing the good study environment at ASB.

## CONTINUING AND FURTHER EDUCATION

- **Application and admission**

ASB will attract new groups of applicants, among other things through increased focus on tailored activities, also in English, and such activities will not only be offered in Aarhus. There will be an increased focus on clarifying the expectations of students/participants and ASB through more precise communications about course contents and service levels.

- **Learning processes and physical framework**

There will be an increased focus on developing special teaching competencies of specific relevance to continuing and further educational activities and on developing a professional

framework which can accommodate differentiated service levels depending on the fees charged.

- **Teaching content and objectives**

Within the theme of sustainable growth through innovation, we will establish one full-time MBA programme. Moreover, we will develop a flexible master programme in languages, communication and knowledge, a flexible master programme in taxes and duties and an MBA in Technology for qualified applicants with a technical background. More courses and conferences will be organised for top managers in the business community as well as a summer programme which includes international researchers within the field of continuing and further education.

- **Life-long learning**

ASB will focus on its own students and their need for continuing and further education, for example by putting together a coherent programme for alumni. In this context, the departments, student counsellors, career guidance officers and the Centre for Continuing and Further Education will work more closely together.

## 5.5. Tasks

Below is a list of the tasks which must be undertaken to realise the objectives within the educational area:

- Fair and transparent rules concerning admission to study programmes, including internationally recognised systems for the admission of international students
- Strategy for student counselling
- Strategy for job and career guidance
- New tonings for the BSc in Economics and Business Administration programmes
- New Graduate Diploma in Business Administration (Tax) programme
- IT-supported exams (E-exams)
- Course and study monitoring system
- Clarification of educational qualifications in relation to career jumps
- Standards for curricula
- Incentive and career policy for directors of study
- Integration of the Institute of Business and Technology (IBT) in ASB
- ASB in the internal education market at Aarhus University – procedures and finances
- Collaboration with the rest of Aarhus University, especially the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities

- Special analysis aimed at identifying the continuing and further educational needs of individuals and businesses, both nationally and internationally
- Establishment of one or more advisory boards for the executive area
- Further development of incentives for departments and employees to involve themselves in executive activities
- Increased interplay between visiting researchers and executive activities

The tasks are described in greater detail in the action plans related to the strategy.

## 6. Internal and external relations

In 2012 ASB will be well on its way to becoming a leading international business school. The leading position will be attained through the quality of our research and educational activities, highlighted by our strong research centres and high-profile study programmes. To attain this leading position, we must take the lead within sustainable growth through innovation.

In the 2009-2012 period, ASB will develop a communication strategy and a plan which highlights and draws attention to ASB as an innovative, sustainable and technologically intelligent business school which delivers research and education of the highest quality. Initially, the task is not one of promoting specific products; it is rather a question of direction and of the visionary impact of the new positioning.

*The aim is to transform ASB's classic business image into a sustainable, innovative and international business brand.*

The task is to position ASB on the map of international business schools in the 2009-2012 period. We will do this by developing a pivotal idea for launching ASB as an innovative, sustainable and technologically intelligent business school which can be used in the coming three years and in all communicative contexts.

ASB will be pivotal in gathering and seizing ideas, developing new products and creating solutions through the involvement of our stakeholders in the form of members of the business community, students, researchers and the rest of society.

Keywords for communication are:

- High quality and innovation within research and education
- Visibility in all relevant academic fora, both nationally and internationally
- Proactive and committed use of personal relations
- Web and dialogue-based tools to underpin our communication at all levels
- Media partnerships
- Personalised communication

### 6.1. International relations

ASB wants all aspects of its activities to be of international quality and thereby internationally competitive. An important element in this development is integrated internationalisation, i.e. the integration of internationalisation into all activities and

synergies between internationalisation activities in different areas.

The goal is to take part in the international production of new knowledge, to be able to compete for employees and students internationally, to produce competitive graduates for the global labour market and to be an attractive partner for national and international businesses and for some of the leading business schools in the world.

ASB will establish international partnerships which can contribute to realising our vision and objectives for our research and educational activities and which can augment our focus on sustainable growth through innovation. We will reach a new level in our strategic collaboration with a selected group of business schools at a high international level, among other things through our membership of Coimbra, PRME, Global Compact, AACSB and other relevant fora.

We will, among other things, use such strategy collaboration with strong academic environments abroad to carry out systematic benchmarking with the dual aim of developing the quality and efficiency of our activities and highlighting our strong position in relation to other leading business schools. Closer and more extensive collaboration with strong international partners will strengthen our research and educational activities through access to talent and through the possibility of learning via the exchange of students and researchers. We will work with top international researchers on joint publications.

ASB will continue its international marketing activities and thereby work in a targeted fashion to attract the best students and researchers. Through strong strategic partnerships we will achieve valuable co-branding and a stronger international profile, and we will continue to develop our international alumni network. As part of our efforts to ensure increased international visibility and recognition, we will make a special effort to develop our collaboration with the international business community, in this context contributing to intelligent growth, sustainability and innovation, also in international companies.

We will increase the job opportunities for our graduates with international businesses. This will, among other things, require broadening the activities of the career centre to include the international market and the establishment of internships with international businesses. Moreover, we will establish a service offering guidance for prospective international employers at selected management levels and ensure international representation on the Advisory Board.



## 6.2. Competencies and relations

To become a leading international business school, ASB will increase its strategic focus on competencies and relations. This has a dual purpose. Strengthening the competencies and improving the working conditions of employees heighten the quality of ASB's research and educational activities. At the same time, attractive working conditions with a sound work/life balance and integration will boost the wellbeing of employees in general and also strengthen the recruitment base.

Flexible working methods and terms of employment will contribute to ensuring optimum working conditions for employees with special needs and wishes. The integration of people's working and private lives means that individual employees both experience and display flexibility in relation to their employment with ASB. Such integration can contribute to improving the conditions for international employees – also outside the workplace.

Attractive working conditions are a way of increasing performance and of strengthening our ability to recruit and maintain the best human resources.

Particular focus will be on two aspects of the working conditions of employees: Management and culture and focus on two groups of employees: International and female teachers and research staff.

The aim is for ASB, in the Workplace Assessment 2012, to have the highest general employee satisfaction score at Aarhus University, and also for the international staff members and the female researchers to be at least as satisfied as the other employees at Aarhus University.

ASB introduces systematic and strategic competence development for all leaders and starts focusing on developing competencies within educational and research management.

We will continue to work to develop the language competencies of ASB's employees, and special initiatives will be launched to strengthen ASB as an international workplace.

## 7. Administrative support functions

ASB's visions for high-quality research and education and the theme of sustainable growth through innovation must be supported by economic and physical frameworks and by an administration working to the highest international standards. As part of ASB's targeted efforts to fulfil the strategic objectives for the 2009-2012 period, focus will be on the working conditions of the teaching and research staff, including the administrative and technical support of core functions.

Administrative support functions must contribute to creating the best possible working conditions for ASB's teaching and research staff, thereby contributing to a joint focus on and responsibility for meeting ASB's objectives of research excellence, world-class study programmes and interdisciplinary collaboration on sustainable growth through innovation. This applies, for example, in connection with applications for research funding and reporting.

This places specific demands on the quality and availability of the administrative support and therefore the competencies of the administrative and technical staff which must be geared to supporting ASB's strategic objectives.

At the same time, it places certain demands on how support functions are organised at departmental, ASB and AU level. The administrative and technical support must be analysed regularly to ensure that the administrative and technical support contributes to creating working conditions which make ASB an attractive workplace.

We will consider how we, as part of Aarhus University, can participate in joint support solutions and create expedient interfaces between the central and local administrative functions. Optimising administrative processes is an essential element in operating as efficiently and competitively as possible.

### 7.1. Library, ICT and Media

As regards the ASB Library, ICT and Media, we will – during the strategy period – continue our endeavours to ensure that the ASB Library, ICT and Media stay in the technological premier league and provide service and support of the highest quality to ASB's core areas of activity – fast and efficiently.

We will work to ensure extensive integration between IT systems and data, media and contents. We will organise tasks to involve various disciplines and regardless of ownership. We will strengthen learning by providing inspiration for an increasing use of digital media and ICT-assisted learning tools

in the teaching activities and ever-increasing exploitation of the possibilities offered by thinking 'IT in everything'. For example, virtual assessment committees will make it possible for internationally acknowledged top researchers to be represented on the PhD assessment committees.

We will intensify the modernisation of the ICT infrastructure and strengthen the quality of ICT support so as to meet the ever more challenging requests of students and employees. Communication to users must be improved even more, and we will increase the level of information vis-à-vis the primary users through the use of new communication channels and digital media.

We will constantly focus on developing ICT solutions which add value to ASB's core activities. We will use ICT in a considered fashion and create responsible, durable and sustainable ICT solutions.

By using modern technology, media and digital infrastructure we will continue to create new and advanced forms of integration between the ASB Library, learning and new possibilities and frameworks for the collaboration between the academic organisation, the administration organisation and the ASB Library.

### 7.2. Administrative support of the continued internationalisation process

The administrative support of the efforts directed at increased internationalisation covers a large number of tasks which will continue to develop in the coming strategy period. These include administrative tasks involved in accreditation and ranking processes, Summer University, international branding, exchange programmes, fairs for foreign students, international workshops, identifying international sources of finance, marketing processes etc. etc.

Offering support in connection with the many international tasks requires cultural insight and flexibility. An international research and educational environment requires cultural and linguistic competencies at a high level throughout ASB.

These are some of the next steps which will be involved in the development of ASB's administrative support of the internationalisation process in the coming period:

- Support the establishment of benchmarking initiative and strategic collaboration
- Implement 'IT in everything'
- Continue to develop processes concerning the advertising of jobs and recruitment as well as the

introduction and retaining of staff who support the recruitment and retaining of international staff

- Ensure good conditions for visiting faculty and newly recruited international staff members, including accommodation
- Develop welcome programmes at ASB and departmental level
- Participate in the promotion of an international culture at ASB and at departmental level which means that new employees are naturally involved in academic and social activities
- Develop and offer courses in languages and culture for administrative staff
- Develop and offer courses in Danish language and culture for foreign staff
- Establish international exchange programmes for administrative staff

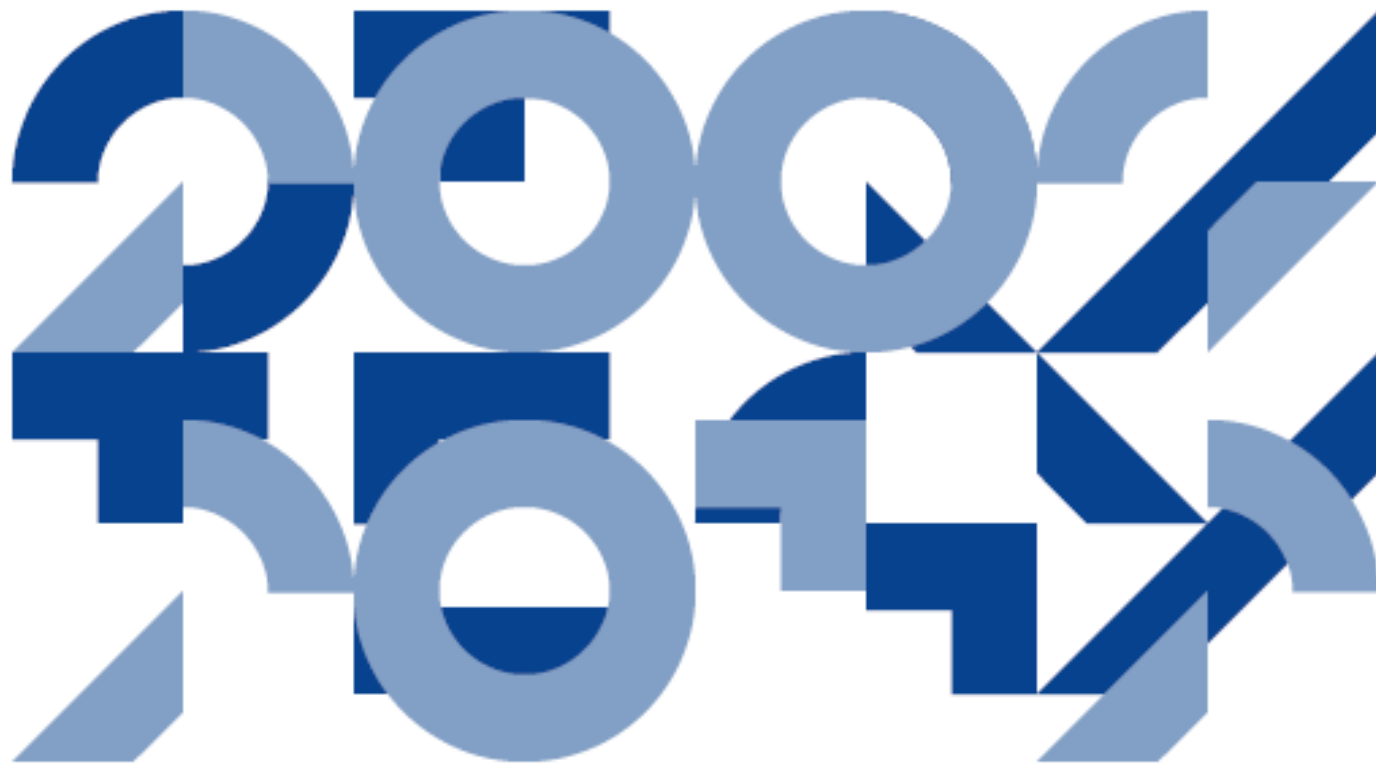
## 8. En route to 2012 and new goals

In 2012 ASB will be a leading business school in terms of both the research conducted and the study programmes offered. ASB has developed and transformed knowledge and ideas about growth, innovation and sustainability for the benefit of students, companies, organisations and society. Such innovation builds on the interplay between ASB's strong research environments and investments in its educational activities.

We have achieved this because in 2012 we have, among other things, achieved the following strategic objectives:

- We have achieved EQUIS, AACSB and AMBA accreditation.
- We engage in systematic benchmarking with a view to developing quality and efficiency in collaboration with a relevant portfolio of three to five leading international business schools.
- We have established one or more strategic relations in the portfolio of leading international business schools against which we benchmark ourselves.
- We are among the top 50 in one or more business school rankings in Europe or in similar relevant rankings covering education and/or research.
- We have established an interdisciplinary theme within sustainable growth through innovation which creates relevant world-class research across ASB's departments and centres.
- We produce innovative and groundbreaking research of relevance and topicality which is communicated to the business community and other relevant parties. We have increased our focus on the quality of our research and increased the number of publications in the best journals.
- We have maintained or increased our market share of research funding and other types of external financing.
- We have created strong national and international business partnerships.
- We have a broad portfolio of high-quality study programmes which are strongly research-based and which focus strongly on sustainable growth through innovation.
- All our study programmes have been accredited, and we have established a full-time MBA in English.
- New study programmes are being offered jointly with Aarhus University and with other national and international institutions.
- Our portfolio of continuing and further educational activities has been developed, and ASB is an active provider of courses for both the Danish and the international business communities.
- We have strengthened all research and educational activities through the increasing exploitation of the possibilities inherent in 'IT in everything'.
- We have satisfied and proud employees, and in the 2009-2012 period we have further strengthened the teaching and research staff's satisfaction with the administrative and technical support.
- We are known and recognised in all relevant academic fora and in society in general, both nationally and internationally.
- We have launched special initiatives for international employees and female researchers.

The above-mentioned objectives are examples of some of the overall results which we have achieved in 2012 and which will contribute to making ASB stand out as a leading international business school. The strategy comes with a number of action plans which, at an operational level, describe the results which we will achieve in 2009-2012 to fulfil the overall strategic objectives.



# AARHUS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, AARHUS UNIVERSITY

Growth  
Innovation  
Sustainability



## AN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL

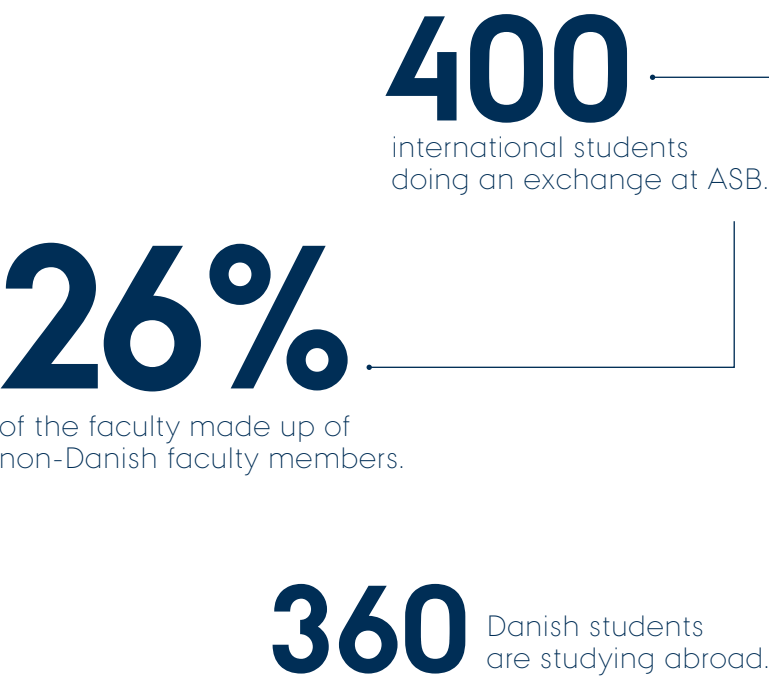
We strive to rank highly as an international business school in terms of both research and education. We wish to integrate internationalisation in all the activities conducted at ASB.

Twenty-six per cent of the faculty is made up of non-Danish faculty members. We publish in international journals and collaborate with a large number of international companies.

ASB offers a complete English-language study programme at both undergraduate, graduate and PhD level.

We collaborate with more than 200 international universities on offering our students exchange opportunities. Moreover, we have entered into several double degree collaboration agreements.

Nine hundred international degree students from 80 countries are currently taking undergraduate or graduate degrees at ASB. Four hundred international students are doing an exchange at ASB, while 360 Danish students are studying abroad with our partners worldwide.



## FUTURE LEADERS AND SPECIALISTS

ASB offers a wide range of study programmes within subject areas such as business languages, business administration, business communication, business law, European studies and IT. All our study programmes must prepare today's – and tomorrow's – leaders and specialists to think in terms of intelligent growth, innovation and sustainability. Our close collaboration with the business community ensures that all study programmes are relevant and meet the demands of Danish as well as international companies and organisations.

The three-year undergraduate programme can be supplemented by two-year graduate programmes, which are a qualification for the three-year PhD programme.

We offer 25 different ways to combine undergraduate programmes and 22 different graduate programmes with a variety of specialisations. In addition, there are several summer schools/summer university programmes.



## A BUSINESS SCHOOL IN A TOP 100 UNIVERSITY

Aarhus School of Business (ASB) is a university school under Aarhus University, one of the top 100 universities worldwide. ASB is one of the biggest and best business schools in Europe. Our EQUIS accreditation places us in the same exclusive company as

London Business School and INSEAD in France. As of 1 January 2009, 113 universities and business schools out of approx. 4,000 around the world held EQUIS accreditation.

## SPECIAL FOCUS FOR OUR DEVELOPMENT



All the current global crises demand closer collaboration between the world's universities and societies. Instead of focusing on blind growth with profit as the highest goal, there is a need to foster intelligent growth and innovation. This means that we are making targeted efforts to invest in and develop economically sus-

tainable companies, technologies and solutions which can minimise the effects of major crises. For this to happen, companies, organisations and society at large must be able to look at the bigger picture and handle a complex world. ASB wants to contribute to this development by focusing on growth, innovation and sustainability.

## MISSION

Aarhus School of Business, Aarhus University contributes added value to society through research, education and dialogue on companies and organisations and their surroundings. Together with

the rest of Aarhus University, we develop knowledge, welfare and culture through research and research-based education, dissemination and consulting.

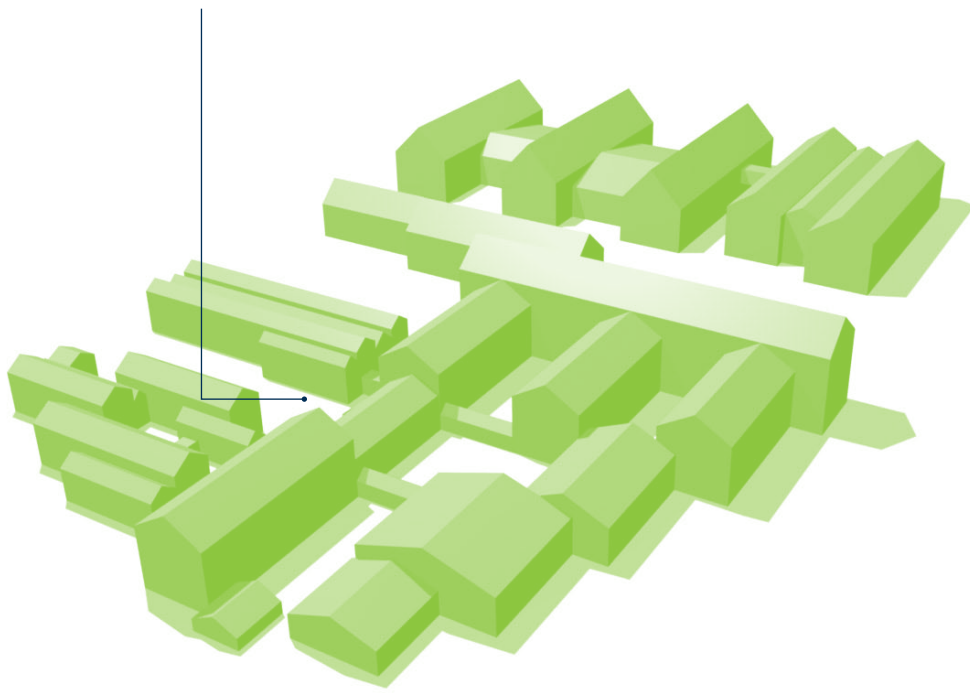
## VISION

ASB wants to be a leading, international business school. ASB wants to develop and transform knowledge and ideas, that cre-

ates sustainable growth through innovation for the benefit of students, companies, organisations and society.

## 6 DEPARTMENTS

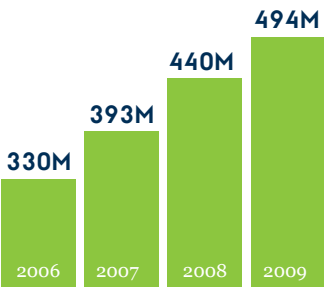
Department of Management
Department of Marketing and Statistics
Department of Business Studies
Department of Language and Business Communication
Department of Business Law
Department of Economics



## RESEARCH BUDGET 166.5M

ASB's research budget totals DKK 166.5 million, of which DKK 52.7 million is externally funded.

## ORDINARY ANNUAL REVENUE 494M



## LEADING WITHIN RESEARCH

CORE	Centre for Organizational Renewal and Evolution
ASBccc	ASB Centre for Corporate Communication
CCP	Center for Corporate Performance
Centlex	Centre for Lexicography
MAPP	Centre for Research on Customer Relations in the Food Sector
CIM	Centre for Research in Integration, Education, Qualifications and Marginalization
CIBL	Centre for International Business Law
CORAL	Centre for Operations Research Applications in Logistics
DOGE	Centre for Design of Global Enterprise
KCL	Knowledge Communication Lab
LsLab	Learning Styles Lab
Strategy-Lab	

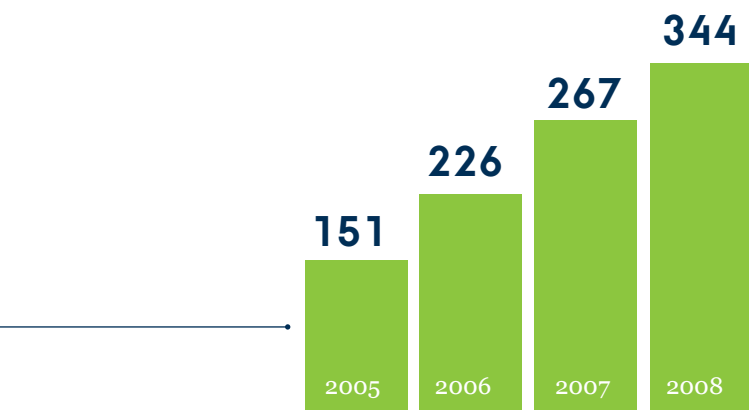
## ASB MANAGEMENT

Børge Obel, Dean  
Jakob Arnoldi, Vice Dean, Director of Research  
Peder Østergaard, Vice Dean, Director of Education  
Tove Bang, Library Director  
Steen Ib Kjeldsen, Administrative director

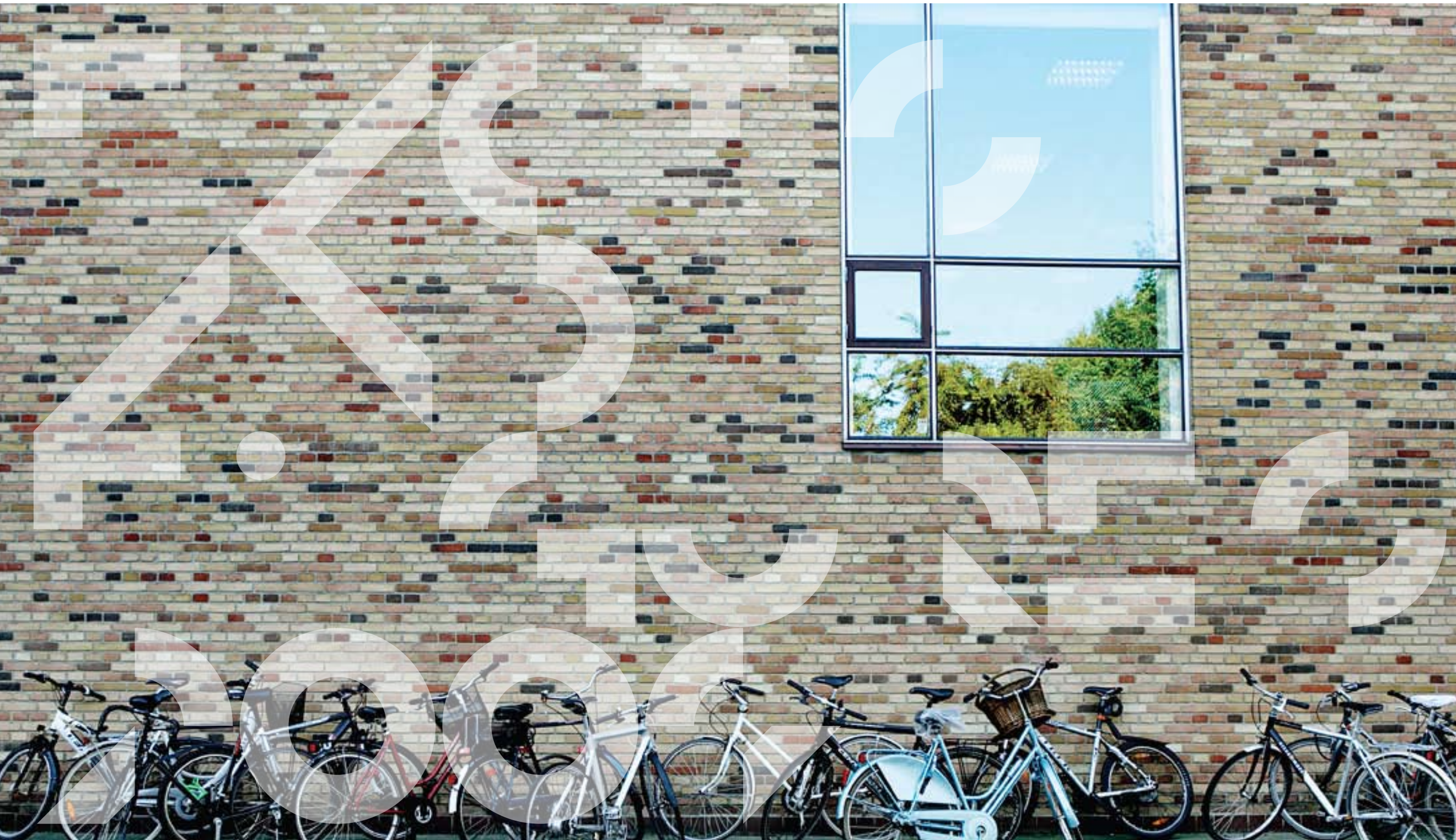


## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Articles in peer-reviewed academic journals:







In addition to its main address at Fuglesangs Allé 4, ASB also has premises at Haslegaardsvej 10, Hermodsvej 22 and Fuglesangs Allé 26.

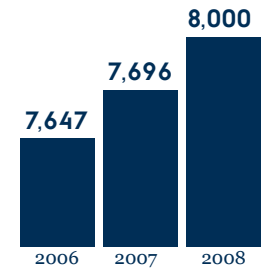
# A LIVING STUDY ENVIRONMENT

ASB is well-known for its unique study environment. We have Denmark's largest and most active student organisation, **Studerterlauget**, which counts some 3,500 members. The organisation is responsible for running the cafés PlugInn and Caféen as well as the popular campus bar Klubben. Studenterlauget has about 130 employees, the majority of which are students.

Among the many leisure time activities available to the students, there are 27 different clubs and associations, an extremely popular Thursday bar with a disco, concerts featuring top bands, theatre revue, fitness rooms and intimate cafés.

# 8,000

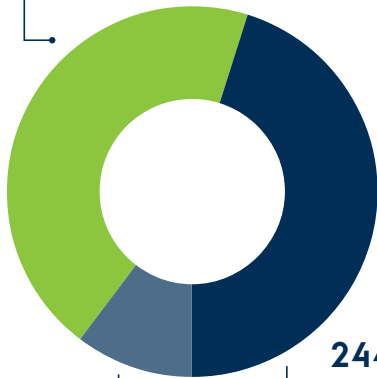
## STUDENTS



# 540

## EMPLOYEES

250 administrative employees



46 professors

244 researchers  
In addition, 160 part-time lecturers

# 86

## PHDS

ASB has 86 PhD students, with fifteen industrial PhDs and sixteen externally funded PhDs. Twenty-nine of the PhD students are foreign nationals.

## ASB CAREER CENTRE

arranges contact to companies for students and graduates and offers companies recruitment of the most competent and motivated candidates.

Twenty-nine companies are ASB Career Centre partners, and new partners are joining up all the time.

## ASB STUDENTERFORUM

is a student union which aims to ensure all students

optimum studies in a well-run study environment.

## ASB ALUMNI

is an exclusive and free network for everyone who has graduated from ASB comprising more than 6,000 alumni. Almost 500 of these are members of our online

community – ASBYou Alumni. We have established local networks in cities and countries all over the world – including Copenhagen, London, China, the Netherlands and Australia.

## CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

ASB has an Advisory Board consisting of external members which represent the users – both corporations and

academic institutions. The Advisory Board advises the Dean and management team on strategic matters.

# ASB EXECUTIVE

## Continuing & further education for the business community



ASB Executive offers continuing and further education taught in Danish at a high academic level. In addition to the Graduate Diploma programme, ASB Executive also offers a number of master programmes and an MBA Summer School:

- International Master in Entrepreneurship Education and Training
- Executive MBA
- MBA
- Master in Environmental and Energy Law
- LLM in VAT and Indirect Taxes
- Master in IT
- Executive Master of Corporate Communication
- MBA Summer School
- Master of Public Governance

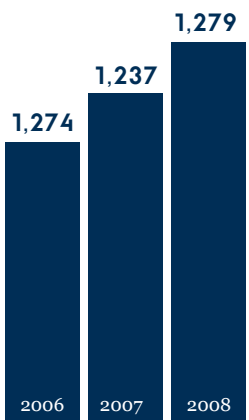
## NUMBER OF ASB EXECUTIVE COURSES

# 50

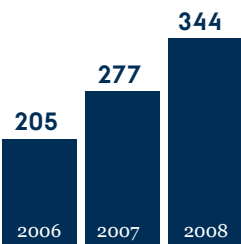
ASB Executive offers nearly 50 courses a year – both one and two-day courses designed for specific companies or organisations. A variety of activities are offered in both Aarhus and Copenhagen. Revenue totals approx. DKK 35 million.

## NUMBER OF STUDENTS

Graduate Diploma students



Master students





2008

# *Welcome*

to Aarhus School of Business,  
University of Aarhus



**Aarhus School of Business  
University of Aarhus**

Handelshøjskolen  
Aarhus Universitet

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# Welcome to Aarhus School of Business

I am pleased to welcome you to Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus (ASB). I hope that you find your time here rewarding, intellectually challenging and fun.



A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'B. Obel', written in a cursive style.

**Børge Obel**  
Dean, Head of School

“Our EFMD accreditation places us in the same *exclusive company* as London Business School and INSEAD in France”



#### One of Europe's biggest and best business schools

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Your new school is one of the biggest and best business schools in Europe. We regularly earn high marks for our unique study environment and for the composition of our study programmes. The merger in 2007 with the University of Aarhus means that your diploma will also carry the name of one of the best universities in the world. The merger will give you more opportunities in terms of electives and new interdisciplinary study programmes.

For more than 60 years, ASB has made a contribution to society through research, education and dialogue on the creation and development of companies and organisations. We continue to grow and change to meet the requirements of modern society, ensuring that your time at Aarhus School of Business will be of value to you for the rest of your life.

#### Research at the highest level

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At Aarhus School of Business, you will be taught by leading Danish and international researchers. Within their individual fields of study, they help develop the latest knowledge to benefit society, business and students like yourself.

**“315 researchers are ready to share with you the latest knowledge on the creation and development of companies and organisations”**

**“80 PhD students are currently undergoing research training”**





### Study programmes focusing on quality

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Because you have chosen to study at Aarhus School of Business, you are guaranteed an education at the highest academic level and with an international focus. In other words, you will be well-prepared for the job market in a globalised world.

We work vigilantly to increase the quality and internationalisation of our activities. At the same time, it is important to us that you find a connection between theory and practice in your studies. We, therefore, help you take responsibility for your learning in order to give you the best foundation upon which to build.

"ASB offers study programmes in the areas of **business administration, business law, business languages and corporate communication**"

"3,000 young people are pursuing a **bachelor degree**  
– 7 per cent are international students"

"2,800 young people are pursuing a **master degree**  
– 20 per cent are international students"

"**26 different ways** to combine bachelor programmes"

"**24 different master programmes** with a variety of specialisations"



### International environment

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Our extensive network of universities and business schools throughout the world gives you a wealth of opportunities for gaining international experience during your studies. You will also acquire in-depth knowledge about management and corporate communication from a global perspective. And at ASB you will meet visiting students from all over the world and from many different cultures every day.

**"Our 680 international degree students come from 75 different countries"**

**"Each year, we receive 350 international exchange students"**

**"Each year, we send 400 Danish students on exchanges abroad"**

### Close dialogue with the business community

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All our study programmes have been developed in close collaboration with the business community. This ensures that your studies are relevant and meet the demands of Danish as well as international companies and organisations. This also increases your opportunities for doing projects in collaboration with enterprises during your studies – as well as for participating in internships and finding relevant student jobs. Our Career Centre will help you with the contacts you need.

**"165 external lecturers contribute to our study programmes with current cases from their companies"**

**"31 companies are currently partners with the Career Centre – and new partners are joining us every day"**

**"ASB Alumni is a network for all graduates comprising more than 5,500 businesspeople. We have sections in Copenhagen and China and are establishing sections in a number of other countries."**

“We have *partnership agreements with 190 universities and business schools* throughout the world. This means a wealth of opportunities for students to study abroad.”

#### We take responsibility

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At ASB, we educate the business leaders of the future. Good leaders take responsibility for the development of people, companies and society. That is why we appreciate students who get involved outside their studies. Good examples are the 68 students who act as mentors for refugees and immigrants to help further integration. Many students also take on the role of ‘buddies’ for international students to help them feel at home at ASB. Your ideas are also welcome.

#### An important part of your life

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The years you spend at university are an important part of your life. Professional inspiration and hard work in our beautiful buildings go hand in hand with social activities such as sports, theatre, music, parties and travel. The surroundings are important – but so is the way we treat each other. You can help make ASB a great place to study – and a nice place to be...

**“240 staff members look after the administrative backdrop to your studies”**

**“A new code of conduct describes the values that students feel should characterise their social lives and cooperation at ASB”**

# Growth Innovation Sustain- ability

*the way we think · the way we act · the way we contribute*

*ASB Strategy 2008-2020*