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How Culture Affects Marketing Content: A Comparison Between Austria and the United States

ERICA DICARLO
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Matt M. Checchio
Instructor of Marketing
Thesis Supervisor

Jennifer Chang Coupland
Professor of Marketing
Honors Advisor

* Electronic approvals are on file

Abstract

Social media marketing is increasingly replacing traditional means of marketing globally. This thesis aims to understand the differences in digital marketing content and strategies used in the United States and Austria, primarily focusing on Facebook and Instagram. This thesis intends to answer the questions: Has promotional social media content become uniform among these different countries? If not, are the differences in content directed to the Austrian audience versus the American audience particular to an aspect of the country's culture?

First, this thesis introduces various digital marketing strategies and digital marketing channels. Second, it gives an overview of Austrian and American culture with a concentration in the food and beverage industry. Third, it provides a content comparison and analyzes the marketing content used by Austrian and American grocery retailers and coffee shops. Finally, this thesis discovers differences and similarities between Austrian and American promotional influencers with a focus in the food and beverage industry.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Before the digital age, marketing and advertising was traditionally executed through newspapers, magazines, television, and radios broadcasts. Today, marketing has gone “digital.” Digital marketing refers to marketing through digital technologies: personal computers, tablets, smart watches, digital toys, software, and apps. Because digital marketing is instantaneous and widely available, it offers tremendous value to consumers and can be successful for any size business from startups to large enterprises.

The common modern digital channels are websites, mobile apps, and search engines. Any website is fertile ground for digital marketing and product promotion. It has been said that “[a website] is the single most valuable piece of digital real estate that you will ever own” (Ryan, 62). The end goal of website marketing is to be able to transform internet traffic into customers who either: (1) purchasing goods online or (2) are inspired to go to a brick-and-mortar location, or (3) at least subscribe to email news. Websites can be accessed by computers, tablets, and phones. Mobile websites were developed to easily fit on a smaller screen and are useful because they reach a broad audience of smart phone owners. Many mobile websites have now developed a more user-friendly marketing channel: the app (Ryan, 2021).

Mobile apps are increasingly replacing the use of mobile websites. According to BBC news, the average time per person spent in mobile apps is 4.48 hours (Wakefield, 2022). 4.48 hours equates to 18.6% of the day on a mobile app. Digital marketers use apps to market to consumers by sending push notifications about recent promotions or products, use the phone’s location to advertise geographically, enhance brand awareness through home screen presence and give a user-friendly platform to purchase products on the go (Ryan, 2021).

The most popular use case of websites and mobile apps is social media. The five most popular platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and TikTok. Facebook and Instagram are both owned by the same company, Meta. As of today, 90% of brands are using social media to increase their awareness (Ryan, 2021). The spend of advertising on global social media increased 32% in 2018 (Ryan, 2021).

Digital marketing channels, advertising techniques and social media promotions are not limited to the United States. Digital marketing technology and platforms are present in other countries around the world, including Austria. Austria is a nation located in Central Europe and is home to 8.9 million people (Embassy of Austria, 2022). The national language of Austria is German, although 73% of Austria speaks English (Tirosh, 2020).

Austrian society is acknowledged for its classical music, art, and architecture. It places a strong emphasis on tradition, royal figures, and decorum. On the other hand, American society is a melting pot of diverse influences and is acknowledged for its individuality and creativity as well as its impact on pop culture.

Since food and beverage are key determinants of a country's culture and tradition, social media marketing is prevalent in this industry. Thus, this thesis compares social media content specifically within the food and beverage industry. Finally, Austrian and American influencer marketing strategies on Instagram will be analyzed.

Chapter 2: Social Media Platforms

Social Media Marketing Reach

The United States has 240 million users on Facebook and Austria has five million users. In terms of percentages, 70.9% of the United States population is on Facebook, and 56.11% of the Austrian population is on Facebook (Facebook Users by Country 2023, 2023). Instagram was bought by Facebook in 2012 for \$1 billion and as of July 2022, Instagram has at least 1 billion users worldwide (Rusli, 2012). 43.79% of the United States population is on Instagram (Dixon, 2023). 28.2% of Austria is on Instagram (Instagram Users in Austria - March 2020, 2020).

Facebook

In the past ten years, social media has capitalized on its increased usage worldwide by monetizing their platforms. With the largest digital outreach in the world, Facebook's marketing channel is extremely effective and complex. Facebook uses targeted advertising algorithms from user data on demographics and purchasing habits (Dewey, 2016). Facebook segments users into categories so that companies can target specific people (Dewey, 2016).

Businesses can also use their own Facebook pages to advertise their products. This is not done through targeted algorithms, but through posting content about their products and services. This type of post is called an organic post. Organic content is only seen if a user follows the account. Therefore, organic posts tend to reach customers who already associate with the brand and is a great way to maintain customer relationships and loyalty (Ryan, 2021).

Figure 1 is an example of a targeted ad based off the geographical location of State College, Pennsylvania. The advertisement includes the word "Sponsored" above. "Sponsored" means that the post is paid for (targeted) and not organic. More specifically, Figure 1 is an example of native

advertising, where the advertisement is placed directly into one's Facebook feed, which is the main page of the website (Ryan, 2021).

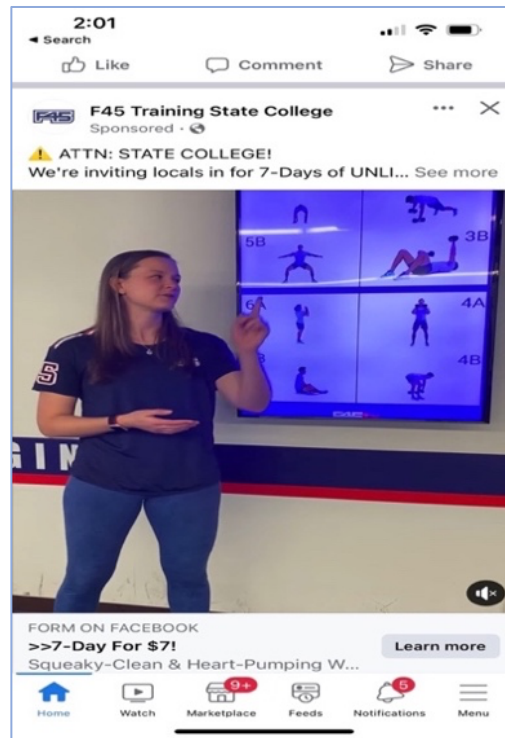


Figure 1: Facebook Sponsored Advertisement

F45 Training State College, Facebook

Instagram

Instagram advertisements were introduced in November of 2013, but in 2015, Instagram announced their plan to open users' Instagram feeds to all advertisers (Goel & Ember, 2015). This change allowed marketers to enable targeted advertisements by demographics and searching behavior, a method already used by Facebook (Lua, 2017). Instagram paid advertisements appear in a user's feed, which is the main scroll page where one can see their following's posts (Lua, 2017).

The ads that appear in one's feed has different formats; the ad could be a single image, a carousel (multiple images or videos to scroll through), or a single video. Targeted (paid) ads also appear in between Instagram Stories (Lua, 2017). These ads have a “scroll up” option that allows the user to be taken to the product's purchase page without switching into a separate internet browser (Goel & Ember, 2015). Businesses on Instagram also take advantage of posting organic content.

Finally, Instagram Reels are short videos a user can scroll through on the explore page. Targeted ads can be placed here between Reels. Below is an image of a native advertisement on an Instagram feed for Raising Caines, a fast-food restaurant in State College, PA. The advertisement uses the location of the user (State College, PA) to promote the Raising Caines location in State College.



Figure 2: Instagram Paid Advertisement
Raising Caines, Instagram

Influencers

Finally, influencer marketing has become a huge marketing success on Instagram.

Influencers are individuals or sometimes groups of people (usually related: couples or families) with a large following who are paid to post content about brands. Influencers are measured by their relevance, reach and engagement with followers (Ryan, 2021). Many influencers are celebrities who already have a platform, and some are less famous but still have a large following. There are different tiers of influencers based on their followings (Figure 3).

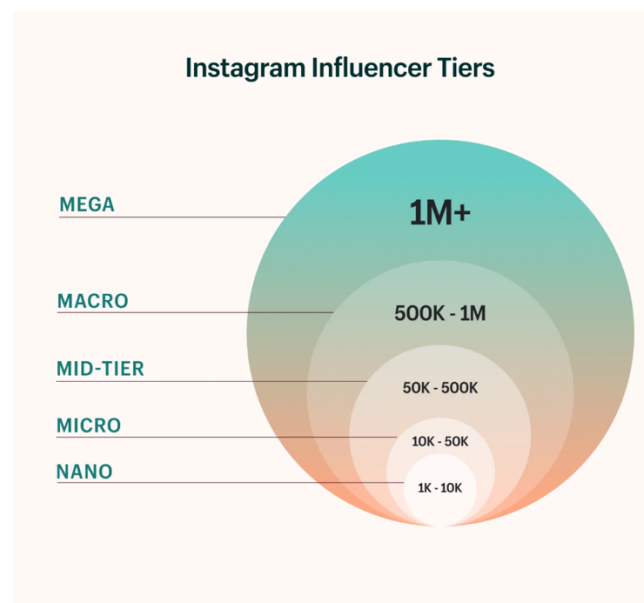


Figure 3: Influencer Chart

Keenan, 2023

There are many different ways a brand can interact with an influencer. First, a brand could offer the influencer free gifts in hopes that the influencer posts about it. Second, the brand can pay the influencer to be a brand ambassador. A brand ambassador would regularly post about new products and provide their following with discount links. Third, the brand can use affiliate marketing where the influencer receives commission from the revenue generated by a post

(Christison, 2022). Finally, the brand could pay the influencer to do “giveaways.” Here, the influencer is paid to post about a product. If their followers "like and comment" on the post, they are entered to win a free product. This interaction is usually expensive for the brand, but influencers prefer giveaways because it increases their account engagement (Pandey, 2022).

Chapter 3: Austrian and American Culture Comparison

In order to discuss the differences in marketing strategy and content posted by businesses in the United States and Austria, key differences and similarities of Austrian and American cultures are highlighted. Both countries are categorized as Western nations, therefore they are compatible when it comes to democracy, health, life expectancy and technologies. However, they have notable differences in culture that contribute to how companies advertise to their populations.

Austria and the United States have many ties, as trade is extensive. Austria exports \$10.6 billion of goods to the United States every year. (United States (USA) and Austria (AUT) Trade | OEC, 2022). The top export from Austria to the United States is Red Bull, which is headquartered in Salzburg, Austria. Red Bull exports to the United States equates to \$1.66 billion every year (Ridder, 2023). The top exports from the United States to Austria are vaccines, blood, antisera, toxins, and cultures (United States (USA) and Austria (AUT) Trade | OEC, 2022).

Cuisine Comparison

Undoubtedly, food is an important aspect of every culture. Almost every country is known (or has a city that is known for) certain foods they have perfected. For example, Austria is known for schnitzel, apple strudel, sausage, Kaiserschmarrn (similar to pancakes), Sacher Torte (the most famous dessert) and apricot dumplings (Schardt). There are many beverages that are made in Austria including Red Bull, white wines, and beer. Austrian traditional cuisine is inspired from German, Swiss and Hungarian cuisine and more recently, Turkish cuisine as well (Schardt). Collectively, Austrian cuisine is called “Beisl” which is a Yiddish word that was introduced by Jewish tavern owners in Vienna (The Vienna Bistro - Vienna.info).

On the other hand, traditional American food consists of hot dogs, sandwiches, cheesesteaks, tacos, salads, pizza, and hamburgers. American food is inspired from cultures all over the world, most notably from Italy, China, Japan, and Mexico.

Coffee Comparison

Coffee is very important in Austrian culture, as coffee is the national drink. The culture of coffee varies greatly between Austria and the United States. Coffee in the United States is more commercialized than in Austria. Big chains of American coffee shops include Starbucks, Dunkin, Peet's, and McCafé. Austria has Starbucks and McCafé, however coffee is more concentrated in local cafés as café culture is very unique to Austria. In America, buying coffee is usually an errand, where coffee is often in to-go cups or received in a drive-through.

Austrian coffee shops are called coffee houses. Coffee houses are designed to look like living rooms, with couches and tables for games and reading. During the turn of the 20th century, famous Viennese artists, musicians and scientists would gather at coffee houses to swap ideas (History of Viennese Coffee House Culture). Austrians tend to linger in coffee houses and spend hours enjoying multiple rounds of coffee and baked goods. Vienna specifically is known for their coffee houses. The waiters and waitresses of Viennese coffee houses have unique and specific titles, "Herr Ober" or "Frau Oberin" (History of Viennese Coffee House Culture). These titles are only used in coffee houses and not restaurants.

Austrian coffee menus are different from America. The biggest difference is the temperature of the coffee. In America, iced coffee is very popular such as cold brew, Frappuccino's, iced lattes and nitro cold brew. Especially for Generation Z, iced coffee is increasingly replacing traditional hot coffee (Monge, 2021). Iced coffee is not popular in Austria.

If one was to order an iced coffee in a traditional coffee house, they would receive a scoop of ice cream or whipped cream in hot coffee.

One of the most popular orders is a “Mélange” which is an Austrian take on a Cappuccino, with espresso, steamed milk and topped with foam (Traditional Coffee Types in Vienna, 2023). A black coffee in Austria is not the same as it is in America. If one orders a black coffee in Austria, it is simply a shot of espresso. Café Americano or “Mocca” is the Austrian version of an American black coffee. (Traditional Coffee Types in Vienna, 2023).

Overall, Austrian coffee is different because most orders involve a shot of espresso, with different types of hot milk additives. American coffee also has espresso options, but it is more popular to order a black coffee, cold or hot, and add cold milks, creamers, and syrups.

Grocery Store Comparison

Austrian and American grocery stores are similar in the fact that they both have a variety of fruits, vegetables, dairy, deli, and bakery items. However, Austrians have a strong passion for sustainably produced, organic produce. In fact, 27% of agriculture in Austria was cultivated organically in 2021 (Facts and Figures - Organic Food, 2023). On the other hand, organic food only accounts for 4% of American agriculture (Overview of the Organic Market in the US, 2022). Austrian grocery stores sell alcoholic beverages including spirits, and drinking ages differ between nations. The Austrian drinking age is 16 for beer and wine and 18 for liquor. The United States drinking age is 21. American grocery stores are not permitted to sell spirits.

Also, Austria has a higher concentration of small, non-chain grocery stores than the United States does (Annual Retail Foods Austria, 2010). Austrian grocery stores do not carry a large supply of hair, cleaning and hygiene products as American grocery stores do. The grocery store can be seen as more of a one stop shop for Americans because there are so many other

products one can buy, such as cosmetics, cleaning supplies, and even office supplies. Grocery retailers in Austria tend to be solely for food.

Holiday Comparison

Finally, Austria and the United States celebrate differently as well. In the United States, there are many different holidays throughout the year, religious and national. The most celebrated holidays in the USA are New Year's Day, Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day, Eid al-Fitr, Easter, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hannukah, and Christmas. The only religious holiday nationally observed in the United States is Christmas Day (Holidays, 2023).

Austria has national holidays such their Labor Day and National Day. Austria is predominately a Catholic country, so many of the Catholic Holy Days of Obligation are nationally observed. For example, the Epiphany, the Ascension, and All Saint's Day (Silver, 2022). In Austria, Fat Tuesday is a big celebration called "Fasching." Austria celebrates Halloween and Valentine's Day but not to the extent that the United States does.

Chapter 4: Social Media Marketing Content Comparison in the Food and Beverage Industry

Austrian Paid Advertisements

There are a significant number of differences between the two nations in terms of their culture surrounding food, beverage, and celebrations. Are these differences apparent in their local digital marketing content? Do global companies cater to these differences when advertising?



Figure 4: Lidl Paid Advertisement

Lidl-Austria, Instagram

Figure 4 shows a paid advertisement that appeared in between Instagram Stories and was pushed to mobile devices located within Vienna, Austria. Figure 4 is from the grocery retailer called Lidl. Lidl is a multi-national grocery chain that is headquarter in Neckarsulm, Germany and located in Austria, the United States, and 30 other countries

(Lidl History | Quality Products Low Prices). The username of the Instagram is “Lidloesterreich” which in English translates to Lidl-Austria. The words on the advertisement translate to “How important is organic to you when shopping.”

The advertisement embodies Austrian grocery shopping culture as it places an emphasis on organic produce. It does this by asking the consumer how important organic food means to them when shopping. Austrian food culture takes pride in their organic (bio) products and their relatively low prices (Facts and Figures - Organic Food, 2023).

Lidl also has stores in the United States and there is an Instagram account dedicated to Lidl in the United States. Although they are the same company, the organic (created not paid) posts are in fact widely different for each Instagram account. During the content analysis period of this study, no paid advertisements about organic produce appeared through the United States Instagram.

Organic Content Comparison from Lidl

Lidl-US’s content for November was solely centered around Thanksgiving and Black Friday. Clearly, Lidl-Austria has no mention of these holidays, as they are not celebrated. Similarly, Lidl-US had multiple Halloween related posts in October. Austria does not celebrate Halloween in the same way the United States does (Silver, 2022). Therefore, instead of posting consistently throughout the month of October with a Halloween theme, Lidl- Austria only posted for Halloween on the day. Naturally, Lidl-Austria had no Thanksgiving and therefore Black Friday inspired posts because Thanksgiving is an American holiday.



Figure 5: Lidl-Austria Organic Post

Lidl-Austria, Instagram

On the flip side, there are posts on the Lidl-Austria Instagram account that align with the Austrian audience. In terms of holidays, the Lidl-Austria account had a post for “Fasching” which is the Austrian celebration of Fat Tuesday. On this holiday, it is an Austrian tradition to eat donuts. Nothing of the equivalent was posted on the Lidl-US account. Figure 5 is a post by Lidl-Austria for Fasching.

Another major difference between the organic content on the Lidl-Austria versus Lidl-US account is the presence of alcohol related posts. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Austrian grocery retailers are allowed to sell spirits. In America, grocer retailers were recently allowed to start selling beer and wine. This cultural and political difference is apparent in their social media. The Lidl-Austria Instagram account frequently posts about cocktails. For example, Figure 6 is a post about a Mint-Julep from Lidl-Austria. Since one can buy all the ingredients in a single location,

presenting a cocktail is a convenient and creative way to advertise liquor, juices, wines and even fruit. The difference in drinking laws is evident in the organic content because no hard-alcohol related content is posted for the Lidl-US account. Lidl-US does however post about wine and beer.

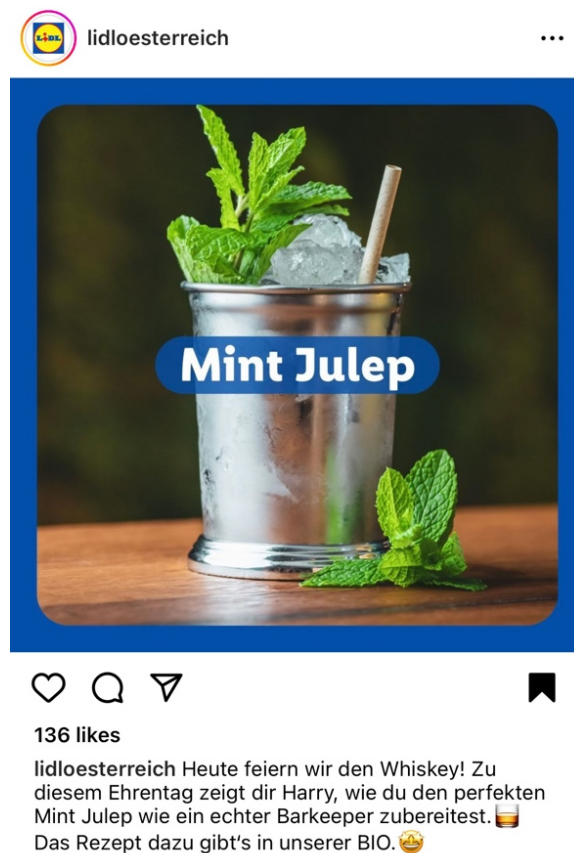


Figure 6: Lidl-Austria Organic Beverage Post

Lidl-Austria, Instagram

It is interesting to note the aesthetics in the organic content for the Lidl Instagram accounts. The American Instagram handle (Figure 7) is much more developed and pleasing to the eye. The posts themselves vary in photos and designs. Lidl-Austria posts fewer pictures and more infographics (Figure 8). Given Austria's cultural focus on decorative art, the lack of imagery in the Lidl-Austria Instagram was unanticipated for the study.

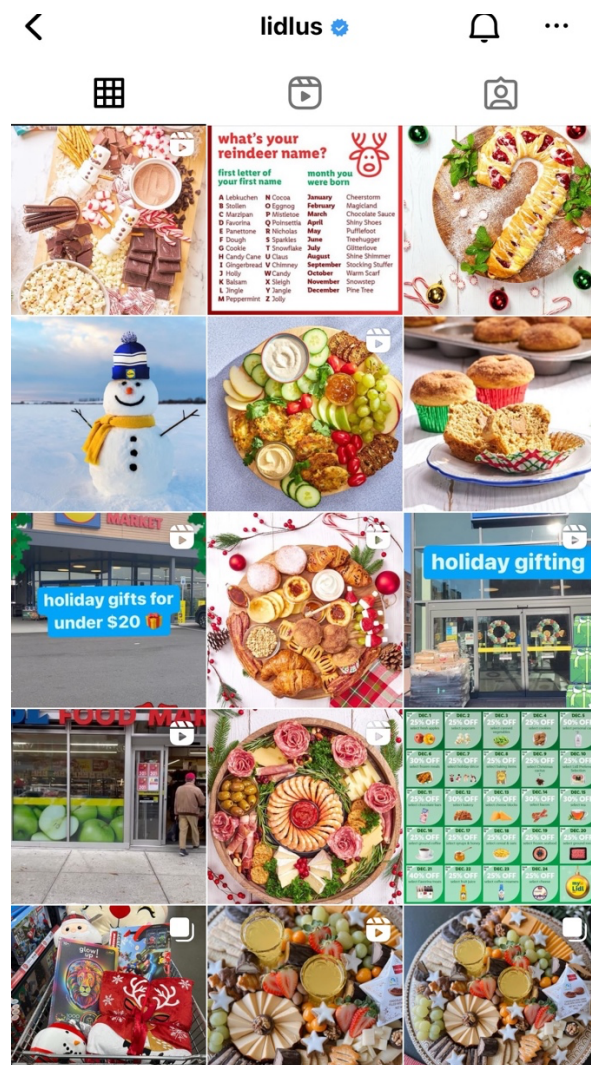


Figure 7: Lidl-US Instagram Page

Lidl-US, Instagram



Figure 8: Lidl-Austria Instagram Page

Lidl-Austria, Instagram

Coffee Content Comparison

As mentioned in Chapter 3, coffee culture varies greatly between the two nations.

Austrian coffee is served hot with some variation of steamed milk. American coffee typically is black coffee that can be brewed hot or cold. These differences are seen in the organic content of grocery stores. Figure 9 shows an organic post from Wegmans' Facebook account. The post is a

picture of jugs of cold brew coffee that can be purchased in the store. On the other hand, Figure 10 shows an espresso machine from the Facebook of the Austrian grocery chain SPAR. SPAR has no content pertaining to cold brew on Facebook.

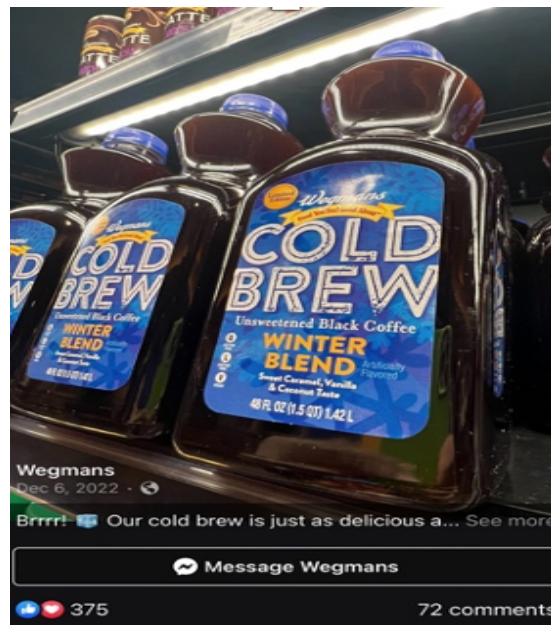


Figure 9: Wegmans Cold Brew Facebook Post

Wegmans, Facebook

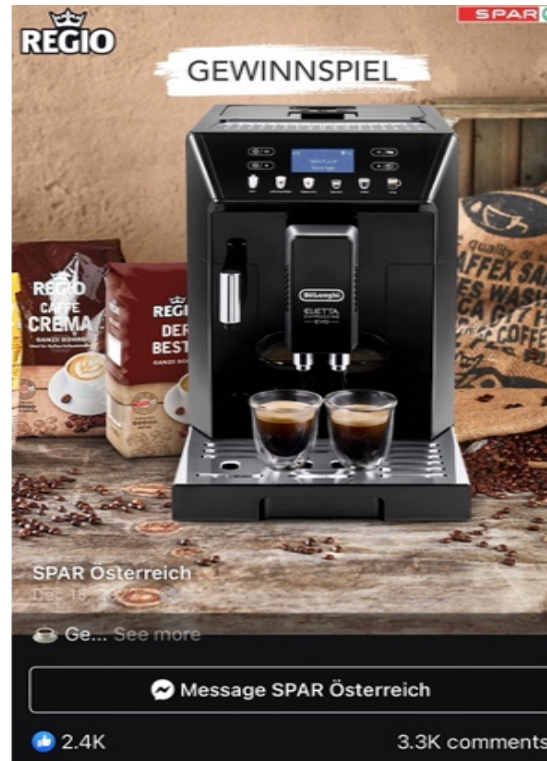


Figure 10: SPAR Espresso Machine Facebook Post

SPAR, Facebook

Coffee content in the grocery industry highlights the difference in product preferences of each nation. However, the cultural elements surrounding Austrian coffee houses is seen on Instagram as well. Café Demel is a Viennese café. Figure 11 includes a post from Café Demel's Instagram. Café Demel's post highlights the beauty and classical architecture of the building. Figure 11 exhibits Austrian society's respect for architectural details, especially in coffee houses. The caption of the post suggests the viewer to take a closer look at the beauty of the building.

Café Demel's Instagram includes many pictures of decorative baked goods, another key element of Austrian coffee culture. Additionally, Café Demel's Instagram includes a post of the King and Queen of the Netherlands tasting their baked goods, underlining Austria's love for monarchs and hierarchy. Austrian leisure in coffee houses is also seen in the Instagram, as it

includes pictures of card tables and reading nooks. The Instagram of Starbucks on the other hand, aligns with American coffee culture. There are many posts of iced drinks, people in the drive-through line and to-go cups.



Figure 11: Café Demel Instagram Post

Café Demel, Instagram

International Cuisine in Grocery Content

American grocery retailers Wegmans and Publix had far more content featuring international cuisine than the Austrian grocery retailers Billa and SPAR. Wegmans and Publix had content that included Asian, European, and Hispanic cuisine. Figure 12 is a post from

Publix's Facebook featuring Hispanic food celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. The content from Billa's Facebook from March 2023 to October 2022 had a few posts about Italian dishes but no mention of any other cultures.

This distinction is directly related to the differences in Austrian and American cuisines and cultures. American cuisine is heavily influenced by other cultures, notably Asian, Hispanic, and Western Europe, which is seen directly in the organic content of Publix. Austrian cuisine is also influenced by Asia and Hispanic countries, but not nearly as much as the United States. Austrian grocery content therefore mostly focuses on traditional Austrian dishes.

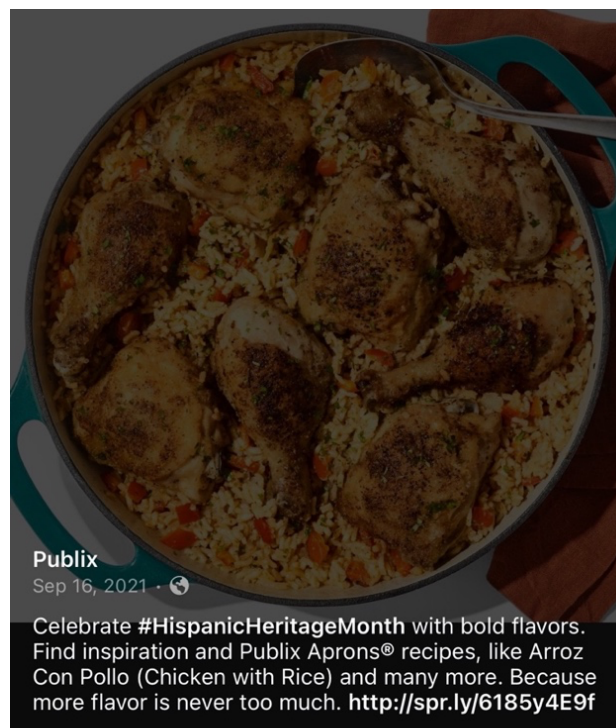


Figure 12: Publix International Cuisine Post

Publix, Facebook

Marketing Platform Strategies

Content is not the only difference between Austrian and American social media marketing. Platform strategies greatly differ as well. In the United States, almost every major

grocery chain (Wegmans, Trader Joes, Giant, Weis, Acme, Kroger, Publix, and Giant Eagle) is utilizing Instagram to market digitally to consumers. In addition, these accounts are all verified as symbolized by a blue check mark next to the username. To be verified on Instagram, the account must be a notable and unique entity, public, and highly searched for with a following in the thousands (Lancaster, 2021). The largest Austrian grocery chains are Billa and SPAR. Both companies do not have Instagram accounts to use as a digital marketing platform.

Facebook marketing for the Austrian grocery industry tells a different story. Billa has a developed and verified Facebook page. Figure 13 is a screenshot of Billa's Facebook page. The page has over 660,000 followers and posts visually appealing and well-developed organic content. In addition to organic content, the Billa Facebook has a view-shop page which allows users to engage directly with products. When a user presses on a picture of a product, the price and an option to add-to-cart appear.

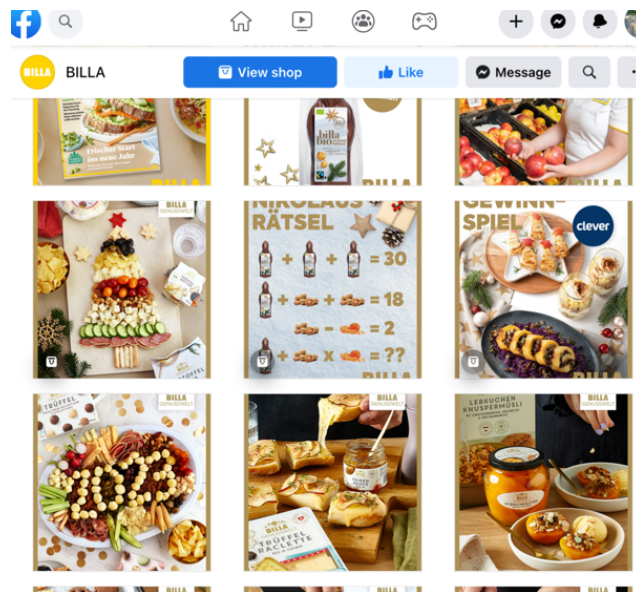


Figure 13: Billa Facebook Shop

Billa, Facebook

SPAR, another major grocery chain in Austria, uses the same platform strategy as Billa. They do not have any organic presence on Instagram, yet their Facebook is well developed and verified with over 355,000 followers. They post professional looking content, but unlike Billa, it does not have a shop now page.

The major difference between the American and Austrian companies on Facebook and is that the American companies use Facebook directly in conjugation with Instagram. This is done through a function called cross posting. Cross posting is an option that allows a user, on a public or personal account, to have their Instagram content be posted simultaneously to their connected Facebook account (Ross, 2022). Cross posting can work in either direction, a post made on Instagram can be pushed to Facebook or vice versa (Ross, 2022). The posting direction of Instagram to Facebook is seen with American grocers. Since Austrian grocery retailers do not use Instagram, they do not utilize the cross posting feature.

Figure 14 is a post from the Wegmans Instagram and Figure 15 is a Wegmans Facebook post. These posts are the same exact content, as the pictures and captions are identical. They were also posted at the same time. All the content on the Wegmans Instagram is identical to that of their Facebook.

Publix also has a well-developed Facebook page because their Facebook is cross posted from their Instagram as well. Because of their organic presence on Facebook and Instagram, these American grocery chains can utilize paid advertisements on either platform.



Figure 14: Wegmans Facebook Cross Post
Wegmans, Facebook



Figure 15: Wegmans Instagram Cross Post

Wegmans, Instagram

Content and Strategy Comparison Analysis

Instagram and Facebook content posted from Austrian and American grocery platforms vary greatly due to cultural preferences and societal norms. Whether due to holidays, differences in cuisine or alcohol laws, the content seen represents the demands of the consumers who reside in that country.

The comparison between Café Demel and Starbucks features the differences in coffee culture. Austria's respect for pristine architecture, leisure and delicate baked goods differs from American informal take-out coffee. Starbucks' Instagram focuses on their products, rather than

the atmosphere of their stores, stressing the differences in American coffee shops versus Austrian coffee houses.

In terms of strategy, the Austrian grocery stores Billa and SPAR primarily market on Facebook and do not utilize Instagram. The American grocery retailers, Wegmans and Publix utilize both platforms through cross posting to capitalize on the Facebook shopping feature as well as the high number of consumers on Instagram.

To further understand why Austrian grocery stores focus on Facebook rather than Instagram, a conversation was conducted with an Austrian business owner named Marie Wolf over WhatsApp in a text conversation followed by a phone call (Appendix A). Marie Wolf works in Vienna, Austria and owns a photography business, where she promotes her products on social media. Wolf was asked the question “Do Austrians typically post more on Facebook than Instagram? Wolf responded that generally Austrians post personal content more on Instagram. Wolf determined that Facebook is used more by older generations and in a more formal setting, when someone is seeking information or would like to sell something. Wolf also mentioned that paid advertisements are equally distributed between Instagram and Facebook.

Austria’s formal view of Facebook as an informational marketplace explains why Billa and SPAR utilize Facebook to advertise and sell their products rather than Instagram. Facebook is viewed as a more certified platform for businesses, and Wolf herself uses Facebook to promote her photography business. In addition, Lidl-Austria’s underdeveloped Instagram and the lack of Billa and SPAR cross posting aligns with Austria’s view of Instagram as more informal and personal than Facebook.

On the other hand, American grocery retailers use both Instagram and Facebook to market products. According to Square’s data, Facebook and Instagram are the two most popular

platforms for Americans to discover new brands and learn about products. 41% of American consumers discover products through Facebook and 35% through Instagram (James, 2021).

Given American consumer behavior on social media, Wegmans and Publix are capturing 35% more of consumers through cross posting. Lidl-US's Instagram page is well developed to capture this market as well.

Chapter 5: Influencer Marketing in Austria and the United States

Influencer Overview

Influencer marketing is a strategy where brands collaborate with an individual or group, called “influencers.” As mentioned in Chapter 2, an influencer has a large following and is paid to post content for a brand. Typically, influencers post branded content on Instagram. Facebook is not as popular of a medium to post branded content unless it is cross posted from Instagram. Influencers can range from those who are famous for their social media content or those who are already famous for business, sports, singing, acting or reality TV. Influencers do not have to be A-list celebrities; influencers can be less popular individuals that post for a local brand and have less of a following.

Famous Influencers

The United States has some of the most famous influencers in the world. On Instagram, the most followed individuals are all celebrities including Selena Gomez (392 million), Kylie Jenner (379 million), Kim Kardashian (347 million), and Ariana Grande (359 million). Although these individuals are celebrities, all of them are paid to promote branded content. Because of their predetermined fame, this type of influencer marketing may be more commonly referred to as endorsements.

Some American individuals rose to fame solely from their social media content, especially during the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020. Some of these individuals include Charlie Damelio, Addison Rae, Logan Paul, and Noah Beck (Rizzo et al., 2020).

Austria has fewer influencers than the United States does. The most famous mega influencer/celebrity from Austria is Arnold Schwarzenegger (Tikkanen, 2022). However, Schwarzenegger is no longer located in Austria and has lived most of his life in California

(Tikkanen, 2022). On a smaller scale, Denisa Retegan is an Austrian influencer based in Vienna, Austria with 108,000 followers making her a mid-tier influencer (Inbeat, 2023). She posts about fashion and jewelry. Other Austrian influencers include Paul Unterleitner with 454,000 followers (Inbeat, 2023). He posts about fitness and is also a mid-tier influencer.

American Influencer Strategy

Large American food and beverage companies utilize influencer marketing heavily. 69.7% of American companies use influencers in their marketing strategy (Dencheva, 2023). In America, Instagram was categorized as the most widely used platform among influencers and marketers (Dencheva, 2023). American companies are using influencers from all over the world, both large and small companies. An example of a mega-tier influencer and brand sponsor is singer Beyonce who is a global brand ambassador for Pepsi (O'Reilly, 2012). Beyonce has over 302 million Instagram followers. On the other hand, Figure 16 depicts a macro-influencer Instagram account @doughertydozen. The Dougherty family has twelve kids and posts videos of their family meals. They post branded content for Wegmans.



Figure 16: Wegmans Influencer Post

Dougherty, Instagram

Austrian Influencer Strategy

Although Austrian grocery stores do not use influencer marketing, the largest Austrian company, Red Bull, is known for working with athlete influencers. Even though Red Bull is an Austrian company, they use influencers from all over the world. One Red Bull influencer is Lucy Charles. Charles is a British professional triathlete who has won multiple Ironman races

(Charles, 2022). She is considered a mid-tier influencer with 437,000 followers. Figure 17 shows Charles promoting the Red Bull brand through a picture of her helmet on an Instagram post. Red Bull also works with mega-tier influencers as well, such as Danny MacAskill who has over 2 million followers on Instagram.



Figure 17: Lucy Charles and Red Bull

Charles, Instagram

Overall, large Austrian and American companies utilize influencers as part of their marketing strategy. Their influencers are from all over the world and range from A-list celebrities to less popular athletes and families. Some influencers, like Beyonce serve as brand ambassadors, while others are affiliate marketers and post content on the brand's behalf.

The Austrian grocery market retailers (Billa and SPAR) discussed in Chapter 4, do not utilize influencer marketing because they do not have a presence on Instagram. Influencer

content is primarily promotional and can be posted from influencers who do not reside in the country of the brand's headquarters. Therefore, influencer posts for the American and Austrian companies studied have no observable cultural elements.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Social Media Platform Strategies

In the grocery industry, Austria utilized Facebook far more than Instagram. The largest grocery retailers in Austria, SPAR and Billa, have no organic presence on Instagram, yet they have well developed Facebook pages that are verified, have online shops and a large following. This is because Austrian social media users see Facebook as a certified platform for business and Instagram as a platform for personal posts.

Grocery chains in the United States have the opposite approach and advertise heavily on Instagram to reach an additional 35% of consumers (James, 2021). For the American grocery chains Wegmans and Publix, Facebook is used in conjunction with Instagram, as all posts created for Instagram are posted on Facebook.

Instagram and Facebook Content Comparison

In the grocery store industry, Austrian and American grocers differ greatly in their social media content. The global grocery chain Lidl gave insight into how marketing for the same company can greatly differ between two nations. Lidl has two different Instagram accounts for Austria and the United States, and not a single post was the same. Austrian and American cultural preferences played a large role in the content that was provided for the Instagram accounts.

The Lidl-Austria Instagram account was under-developed, as the page consisted of mostly blue infographics and had limited professional pictures of the store's products. The Lidl-US account was much more developed, with visual appealing pictures of food and recipes. The Lidl-US account is more developed than Lidl-Austria because Austrians do not view Instagram as a certified advertising platform in the way that Americans do.

Since it is legal to sell spirits in Austrian grocery stores, Lidl-Austria promoted cocktails and cocktail ingredients on their Instagram. Lidl-US had content about wine and beers, but no spirits because of US alcohol laws prohibiting the sale of spirits in grocery stores.

Holiday- themed content was very different for the Lidl-US and Lidl-Austria accounts. Only Lidl-Austria posted for the Austrian celebration called “Fasching” whereas only Lidl-America posted for Thanksgiving and Black Friday, since these holidays are unique to each country. Both accounts posted for Halloween, but the US account posted more content for Halloween than Austria did.

The difference in national coffee preferences was visible in the posts of Wegmans’ cold brew content compared to that of SPAR’s espresso content. The difference in the Instagram content of Café Demel in Vienna versus Starbucks highlights the difference in coffee culture: Café Demel focused on the experience of the coffee house and Starbucks focused on the products they sell.

Finally, American grocery stores had more content that featured international foods than that of Austrian retailers. Having more international foods in the content of American grocery stores alludes to the melting-pot society of America. Billa and SPAR, on the other hand, had many posts about traditional Austrian dishes such as Schnitzel, Goulash, and sausage.

Companies from Austria and America are cognizant of their audience. For businesses, it is important to be aware of cultural differences when creating content on social media. Understanding cultural preferences of a target audience helps create content that is relevant to their consumers.

Influencer Marketing Similarities and Differences

The usage of influencers to promote brands and products is an international marketing strategy. Large American and Austrian companies utilize influencer marketing mainly on Instagram. Both Austrian and American companies work with influencers of varying tiers. These influencers are internationally located and reach consumers from all over the world. The branded content from both nations does not have observable cultural elements to it and are typically promotional. This is a big distinction from the organic content of the grocery retailers, where culture played a big role in content differences. The biggest difference for influencers is that America is home to more celebrities, internet personalities and therefore influencers than Austria is.

Appendix A



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ACADEMIC VITA

Erica DiCarlo

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University **University Park, PA**
Schreyer Honors College; The Smeal College of Business *Class of 2023*
 Major: Marketing
 Minors: International Business and Environmental Inquiry
 Recipient: ***The President's Sparks Award*** (awarded to full time students with a perfect GPA after 60 credits)

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Amazon Web Services

Demand Generation Sales Intern *May 2022- August 2022*

- Achieved Cloud Certification status by passing the AWS Cloud Practitioner Exam
- Created an analytical framework for account managers to better organize client data
- Worked closely with AWS social media manager to implement AWS Twitter strategy

The Haverford Trust Company

Investment Research Team- Summer Analyst *May 2021- August 2021*

- Developed Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) analysis templates to facilitate client discussion and respond to client inquiries
- Listened to various earnings calls and prepared summaries and research notes for use by the investment research team
- Researched and presented an investment proposal to the portfolio selection committee

Professor Jeremy J. Siegel, The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

Research Intern *June 2020- August 2020*

- Provided research support to Dr. Siegel for the new edition of his award-winning finance book, "Stocks for the Long Run," in the field of ESG investing
- Identified and summarized industry leading articles, studies, and white papers addressing important issues in the emerging field of sustainable and impact investing; compiled research outline

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Nittany AI Challenge, Penn State University **University Park, PA**
Sustainability Chair *January 2021-September 2021*

- Designed the user interface of a student created recycling app; placed first in the challenge
- Assisted the team with the promotional video and business model for the app

Phi Beta Lambda Business Organization, Penn State University **University Park, PA**
Director of Philanthropy *February 2020- Present*

- Organized volunteer events with various organizations to promote philanthropic service by members
- Coordinated logistical aspects of volunteer events including transportation and expenses

Economics Department, Penn State University **University Park, PA**
Macroeconomics 104 Undergraduate Assistant *August 2020-December 2021*

- Assisted professor in grading homework, class work and quizzes
- Provided recommendations for organizing assignments and tests