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**INTERSOCIAL:** Unleashing the Power of Social Networks  
for Regional SMEs

**Deliverable D4.4.3: Evaluation report on the overall use of social  
networking**

**Action 4.4: Use of Social Promotion Mechanisms**

**WP4: Development and Evaluation of Innovation Devices in Specific SMEs**

Priority Axis 1: Strengthening competitiveness and innovation  
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Evaluation report on the overall use of social networking

Deliverable D4.4.3 Action 4.4

Workpackage WP4: Development and Evaluation of Innovation Devices in Specific SMEs

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*Purpose:* Introduce social media tools in typical regional SMEs with diverse profiles and evaluate their overall use of social networking in terms of the deployment process, the overall user experience with the provided social media tools, and the impact of social networking on business objectives.

*Results:* Qualitative analysis of semi-structured interview data from the participating SMEs. Graphs presenting quantitative measurements of SMEs’ social media presence and activities throughout the study duration.

*Conclusion:* The introduction of the social medial tools into the participating SMEs resulted in a renewed interest for engagement with social media in general. All SMEs that participated in the study increased their social media presence to some extent either by engaging in new social media networks or by increasing their activity on the existing ones. In addition, employees’ reported that their perceived social presence of the SME had increased. Moreover, the provided social media tools helped some SMEs to realize that they lacked an overall social media strategy with specific objectives and measurable goals. In terms of the social media tool deployment, customized training material that introduces the tools and includes exemplary usage scenarios adapted to each SME profile was particularly valued. However, apart from the positive effect and intentions to use social tools in their everyday activities, the SMEs confronted difficulties in aligning their business goals with continuous usage of such tools. Usefulness of the functionalities included in the provided social medial tools as well as intention to adopt and integrate them in future activities varied considerably among the participating SMEs.

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## 1. Summary

This deliverable presents the results of a process followed in the context of the WP4 aiming at the evaluation of the overall use of social networking. Towards this purpose, it first introduces Social Media (SM) tools that can support SM activities in Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and then, summarizes related work that has been previously done in other Action Lines of the InterSocial Project. Next, it presents an evaluation methodology that was created with an aim to be as ecologically valid as possible, taking into account the project particularities. This methodology is being further analyzed, in terms of study phases and procedures, selection and presentation of the SMEs that participated in the evaluation, selection of SM tools and production of introduction material, and finally, details of both the qualitative and quantitative evaluations conducted. In addition, the deliverable presents all the qualitative and quantitative reports that were produced during the evaluation period and tries to tentatively summarize them by bringing together common observations.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Social media tools: supporting social networking activities in SMEs

Social Media (SM) are today engaging millions of users over the Web. Within this realm, it has become a necessity for Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) to be present and get feedback about their products and services, as SM can be a great venue for increasing their customer base, implementing customer relationship management, targeting advertisement campaigns and performing networking tasks (Keenan & Shiri, 2009; Bi & Konstan, 2012; Zhang et al., 2010;).

In this context, technology aiming to support corporate users to implement their SM strategy plays an important role. However, it also requires specific organizational and operational affordances and thus entails perceived difficulties in implementation which in turn might discourage a company from engaging to SM usage. As a result, despite the wealth of opportunities that SM usage can offer to SMEs, many have been slow to adopt new technologies due to perceived barriers such as lack of money, time, training, negative views about their usefulness, as well as unfamiliarity with technology (Buehrer et al., 2005; Michaelidou et al., 2011).

SM tools aim to lift some of these barriers by helping companies manage multiple SM networks, enhance their social presence and perform brand monitoring tasks. To what extent these tools can actually support corporate users, and especially SMEs to adopt, engage and integrate effectively SM in their everyday activities has to be assessed. To this end, case studies on the deployment, usage and impact of SM tools may provide valuable insights on best practices in fostering intention to use them, defining or re-establishing a SM strategy, selecting tools that would embrace changes in organizational and structural levels and measuring their impact and return on investment (ROI) (Blanchard, 2011).

This deliverable presents a case study aiming to introduce SM tools in typical regional SMEs and evaluate their overall use of social networking. The evaluation was performed from three perspectives: the deployment, the overall user experience with the provided SM tools, and their impact on business objectives. Three SMEs with diverse profiles, business goals, operational and organizational structures participated in the study. Our efforts were driven by questions such as: “What are the needs of typical regional SME in regard to social networking?”, “What kind of tools could assist them?”, “How easy can such tools be integrated into their activities?”, and “How much impact can tools have on SMEs social presence?”.

### 2.2 Relation to previous work in the InterSocial project

This deliverable builds upon the work presented in previous deliverables of the InterSocial project. First, the three out of the four SM tools that were deployed and evaluated in the context of the case study reported in this deliverable were: a) the **InteroSocial Monitoring tool**, described in D3.3.1 “Social networks monitoring tool”, b) the **Enterprise Social Aggregator (ESA)**, presented in D3.2.3 “Software Tools for automating the local deployment of social web functionality inside SMEs”, and c) the **Social NETWORK Analytis tool (SONETA)**, elaborated in D3.4.4 “Tools for

enhancing SMEs social presence”. The free version of Hootsuite<sup>1</sup>, a popular commercial SM tool that provides a rich set of functionalities, was also deployed in the participating SMEs for comparison purposes.

In addition, this deliverable complements D4.2.2 and D4.3.2, which evaluated the deployment of tools for social web local enhancement and the deployment and adaptation of monitoring tools for the same SMEs respectively. Furthermore, this deliverable presents case study findings related to the overall deployment, usage and impact of social networking in SMEs, and thus is a nice continuation of the work presented in D.4.4.2 which investigated the role of SM in the process of trust building, with particular attention to the case of small companies.

### **2.3 Structure of the deliverable**

In the following sections we first elaborate on the case study methodology. In this context, we present the study phases and procedures, the profiles and SM needs of the participating SMEs, the study materials, and the instruments and metrics used in the study. Next, the qualitative and quantitative data collected are presented and discussed. The deliverable concludes with study findings.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://hootsuite.com/>

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Study phases and procedures

Figure 1 presents an overview of the evaluation methodology. Initially, a semi-structured interview was conducted capturing SMEs’ business profiles, existing SM presence, policies, and needs (see section 3.2). Next, a set of SM tools was introduced to the participating SMEs, followed by a training session in which training material was provided, including contextualized use cases of the tools (see section 3.3).

Subsequently, the SMEs participated in the study in the last semester of the project. During this period and following a ten-day interval, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each SME in order to collect qualitative data (see section 3.4) on the tools’ deployment process (e.g. level of effort required, training quality), user experience (e.g. usability, usefulness, learnability) and overall impact (e.g. business goals support, change in policies). In addition, we collected quantitative data related to the SMEs’ social networking presence, such as “likes” on the SMEs’ Facebook Page and number of Twitter followers (see section 3.5), before, during and after the study. The study concluded with a post-study discussion.

Narrative Summary Analysis (NSA) and Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA; Miles et al., 2014) were used to analyze the collected interview data. Descriptive statistics and graphs were used to make sense of the collected quantitative data.

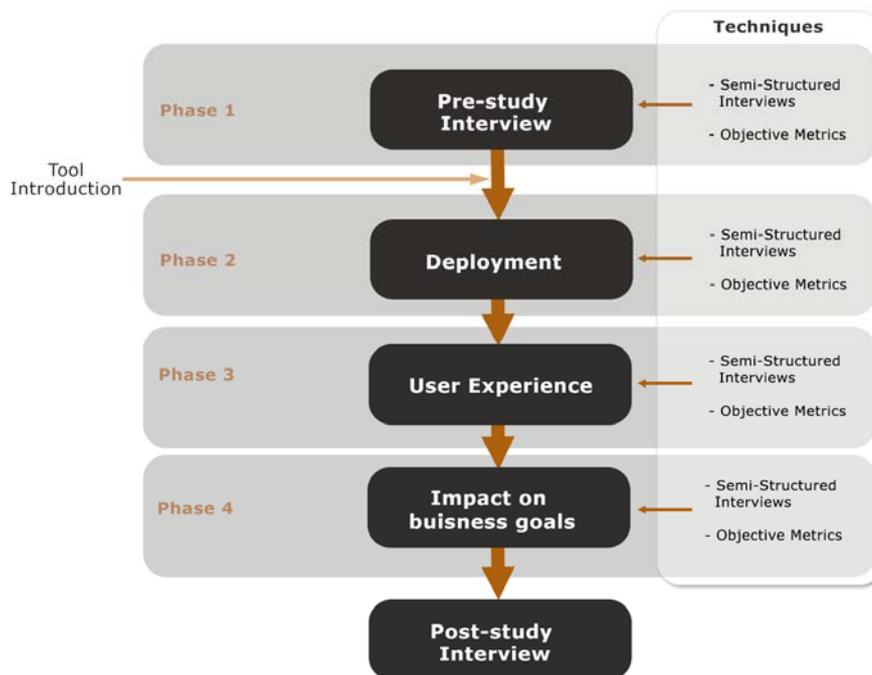


Fig. 1. Overview of the case study methodology

#### 3.2 Recruiting SMEs and profiling participating SMEs

Initially, some meetings were conducted between representatives of the SMEs interested in participating in the case study and UPatras InterSocial staff. These meetings were held in the SMEs premises and aimed to introduce the project, and ensure

participation of the SMEs. All in all, three SMEs were recruited for the case study. The Software Quality Research Group (hereafter referred as SME1) employs 16 persons and is active in undertaking research and development programs. Technosia (hereafter referred as SME2) is a six-person software design and development company. The last SME (hereafter referred as SME3) employs eight persons and acts as an online meta-retailer of shopping deals on a variety of products and services.

Next, pre-study interviews were conducted in order to capture each SME’s business profile, staff profile, SM presence, SM policy and expressed needs. To this end, the following semi-structured interview format was followed:

<b>General questions</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What social media do you use?</li> <li>2. How much time do you invest on social media (on average per day)?</li> <li>3. Do you believe that social media provide reasonable ROI (return/ investment)?</li> <li>4. What is the main problem you face in regard to social media?</li> </ol>
<b>Social media management/policy</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who is responsible for managing your social media account(s)? How do you manage multiple administrator accounts?</li> <li>2. Who is the contact person?</li> <li>3. Who reply to customer messages?</li> <li>4. Are employees allowed to post messages without supervision?</li> </ol>
<b>Social media strategy</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the overall social media strategy of your company?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What do you hope to achieve through your presence in social media?</li> <li>b. Do you have specific, measurable goals for using Facebook?</li> <li>c. Do you have specific, measurable goals for using Twitter?</li> <li>d. Do you have specific, measurable goals for using LinkedIn?</li> </ol> </li> <li>1. How do you measure if you achieve your goals?</li> <li>2. How do you measure your success?</li> <li>3. What kind of posts do you?</li> </ol>
<b>Social media tools</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you use tools to automate posting and measure your success?</li> <li>2. Do you use or have heard about any of the following tools?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Facebook insights</li> <li>b. Hootsuite</li> <li>c. Klout</li> <li>d. Sprout Social</li> <li>e. SocialIQ</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. In what metrics would you be interested?</li> </ol>
<b>Followers/fans profiling</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you know what your target audience is?</li> <li>2. Are you interested in the user profiles of your followers/fans?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does demographic information about followers/fans help you form better messages/posts?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Are you searching for and targeting influencers?</li> </ol>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you launch Social media campaigns?</li> <li>2. Do you pay to boost posts/ or pay for twitter followers?</li> <li>3. Do you schedule your posts?</li> </ol>

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Do you know what the best time is to post your messages?</li> <li>5. What are the most important problems you face in regard to social media?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No time to post</li> <li>b. I don't know what to post</li> <li>c. It is difficult to keep up with multiple social media accounts</li> <li>d. I have no time to engage in conversation with my customers</li> <li>e. I don't have enough information about how to use the various social media effectively</li> <li>f. I cannot afford having an employee focusing on social media</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. What kind of help would you prefer?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. More information/guidelines about appropriate use</li> <li>b. Tools that allow the management of multiple social media accounts (posting, viewing)</li> <li>c. Tools and metrics that let me measure my social presence and the achievement of my goals</li> <li>d. Tools that show me engagement and the effectiveness of specific posts</li> <li>e. Tools that would help me understand the needs of my audience better</li> <li>f. Tools that would allow me to build more effective campaigns</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |
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In the following, the business profile, staff profile, SM presence, SM policy and expressed needs are presented per participating SME.

<b>SME1 Profile</b>	
Business profile	SME1 provides services and runs research programs related to software quality assessment/evaluation, with special emphasis on educational technology. SME1 runs a software quality assessment laboratory which consists of two testing rooms (one for desktop computing, one for mobile computing) and an observation/control room separated by one-way mirrors. The lab is equipped with a roof-mounted video camera, sound recording devices and specialized software, such as software for logging and analyzing users' actions.
Staff profile	16 people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 with PhD,</li> <li>• 7 with master,</li> <li>• 1 with technological education</li> </ul>
Social media presence	Facebook - <a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/SME1">http://www.facebook.com/pages/SME1</a> Twitter - <a href="https://twitter.com/SME1">https://twitter.com/SME1</a> LinkedIn - <a href="http://www.linkedin.com/pub/SME1">http://www.linkedin.com/pub/SME1</a>
Social media policy	A single-representative model is followed. One person is responsible for the SME social media presence and content: posting/replying to messages on a regular basis, updating information, announcing events, accepting followers/friends, monitoring social media traffic etc. This representative is also the contact person and responsible for collecting potential social media content from the rest of the staff whenever such content is available. The SME1 leader encourages all the staff to actively participate in producing social media content for the SME and promoting the SME social media activities to their social networks.
Expressed needs from initial	The social media representative would like to be able to easily produce reports and various visualizations of aggregated data across the SME social networks for a specific time period.

Interview	<p>The social media representative would like to be able to easily post content in all the SME social networks. Currently, multiple logins and copy-pasting of content is required.</p> <p>Staff would like to be able to post social media content directly (without having to send it to the social media representative). The SME1 leader is open to modifications to the current policy only if participation of all the staff does not sacrifice accountability of social media content.</p> <p>In the context of projects funding, the SME is often in pursuit of new partners or specific market trends in specific geographic regions. To this end, a way to monitor social media traffic for specific keywords and specific geographic regions would be a boon.</p> <p>The SME regularly participates in various events (e.g. scientific conferences, project meetings etc) that last for a specific time period (from 1 day to 1 week). In such cases, members of the staff expressed the need to monitor the effect of their social media activities both during and after the event.</p>
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<b>SME2 Profile</b>	
Business profile	<p>SME2 is a Greek Software Company that focuses on software design and development for custom solutions.</p> <p>SME2 was funded in Patras in 2007 by Computer Engineers. Until now SME2 builds a portofilio that consists of companies and institutions from both public and private domain.</p> <p>The Company structure is based on the existence of 4 internal departments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Graphic design and software development Department (info@SME2.gr)</li> <li>2. Sales and Marketing Department (sales@SME2.gr)</li> <li>3. Financial and Accounting Department (accounting@SME2.gr)</li> <li>4. Support and Analisis Department (support@SME2.gr)</li> </ol> <p>Furthermore, the company has build permanent colaborations with high skilled free launcers and project based engineers included programmers, and web programmers, database designers, graphic designers etc.</p> <p>Concerning the provided services on the web, SME2 supports the entire web development process from the requirement analisis and the design of the web site (or application) to the development, the hosting and the technical support.</p> <p>Finally, some interesting projects of the company was the creation of web portals targeting on some vertical markets, the development of a loan management system and the creation of several public web sites in the context of National or European Projects.</p>
Staff profile	<p>2 people (staff members) and 4 external collaborators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 with PhD,</li> <li>• 2 with master,</li> <li>• 1 with higher and 1 with technological education</li> </ul>
Social media presence	<p><a href="http://www.facebook.com/SME2">http://www.facebook.com/SME2</a></p> <p>Email : social@SME2.gr</p> <p>Linked in company &amp; personal</p>

Social media policy	A double-representative model is followed. As part of their job, 2 persons are responsible for the SME social media presence and content: posting/replying to messages on a regular basis, updating information, announcing events, accepting followers/friends, monitoring social media traffic etc. These representatives are also the contact persons and responsible for collecting potential social media content from the rest of the staff whenever such content is available.
Expressed needs from initial interview	<p>Although the company has run some projects on social networks (development of web applications) the owners are not yet convinced about the ROI concerning social presence. In this context they need guides or successful stories from similar companies that can aim them to start building and investing to their social profile.</p> <p>In a more practical manner the social media representative would like to be able to easily post content in all the SME social networks. Currently, multiple logins and copy-pasting of content is required.</p> <p>In the context of projects funding, the SME is often in pursuit of new partners or specific market trends in specific geographic regions, and would like an easy way to achieve this.</p>

SME3 Profile	
Business profile	<p>SME3 is a small online travel agency focusing on custom-made travel packages. Their services include hotel bookings, airplane and ship tickets as well as car rentals. In addition, they allow their customers to make requests for custom-made travel packages in which they can specify parameters such as overall budget, airline company, hotel etc. Their presence is exclusively online. They are tech-savvy and use social media to promote their products. Their social presence is mainly focused around Facebook in which they have 3414 page likes/fans. On average they post 2-3 times a day. They have a twitter account but don't actually use it while they plan to focus more on Pinterest.</p> <p>In this project SME3 will be got involved with two separate projects: the first project concerns a Travel Agency (PROJECT A) while the second a deal-offering website (PROJECT B)</p>
Staff profile	<p>7 people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 General manager</li> <li>• 2 domain experts (Travel agents),</li> <li>• 2 marketing expert,</li> <li>• 2 technical support</li> </ul>
Social media presence	<p>Facebook <a href="https://www.facebook.com/SME3">https://www.facebook.com/SME3</a></p> <p>Twitter - <a href="https://twitter.com/SME3">https://twitter.com/SME3</a> (inactive)</p> <p>LinkedIn – no</p> <p>Pinterest - no</p>
Social media policy	All employees have manager rights and are allowed to post without supervision. However, most of the posts are made by one travel agent and the marketing employee. These two employees are responsible for posting, replying to messages on a regular basis, updating information, announcing events, accepting followers/friends, monitoring social media traffic etc. On average SME3 employees post 4-5 times per day and spend collectively about an hour per day on social media related activities. They do not use social media management tools since the size of their company in terms of personnel is small and therefore social

	media management is not a problem for them.
Expressed needs from initial interview	SME3's contact person stated that the company is absolutely convinced about ROI of social media. They believe that social media marketing pays off better and faster than other online or offline activities in regard to monetary and time investment.

### 3.3 SM tools introduction and training material

The SM tools deployed, used and evaluated in the context of the reported case study fall into the following categories: a) Monitoring tools: InterSocial Monitoring, HootSuite b) Aggregator tools: ESA, HootSuite, and c) Enhancement tools: SONETA, HootSuite. It should be noted that the assignment of the tools into these categories serves as a rough guide of their stated intended usage purpose. InterSocial Monitoring, ESA and SONETA tools were developed in the context of the InterSocial project, whereas the free version of Hootsuite (a popular commercial SM tool) was also deployed in the participating SMEs for comparison purposes.

During the tool introduction, a training session took place in which training material was provided to the SMEs, including contextualized use cases of the tools. Examples of the training material produced for each tool are included in the electronic appendix of this deliverable (files: *Introduction to Hootsuite as an Agregator.docx*, *Introduction to Hootsuite.docx*, *Introduction to InterSocial Monitoring.docx*, *Introduction to Soneta\_new.docx*).

#### 3.3.1 Intersocial Monitoring



The INTERSOCIAL Monitoring Tool is a Facebook and Twitter specific search engine, built upon Facebook's and Twitter's publicly available APIs. The tool allows the user to search for specific keywords or phrases on the timelines of Facebook and Twitter subscribers which they had denoted as being "Public". The tool can retrieve public posts from Facebook, Twitter or both simultaneously.

Purpose: Monitoring Tool

Available at: <http://dmod.eu/intersocial/monitoringtool/>

#### 3.3.2 Soneta



SONETA is a tool that can be used to monitor and enhance the SM presence of an SME. The tool enables tracking of SM traffic in Twitter for a user-defined set of keywords within a user-specified time period and within user-defined geographical region(s). It can be used to recognize trending conversations in a specific geographic region and returns data visualizations in the form of wordclouds, bubbleclouds and treemaps.

Purpose: Enhancement

Available at: <http://soneta.hci.ece.upatras.gr/>

### 3.3.3 ESA



The ESA (Enterprise Social Aggregator for SMEs) tool allows the management and monitoring of three of the most widely used social network platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and Google+). Currently the tool is available both as a Wordpress widget and as an Android mobile application. In addition, ESA offers the possibility of calculating statistics of aggregated data from SM, by exploiting the Facebook and Twitter API (e.g. reach, total mentions). It is an open source project and is available for download on Codeplex.

### 3.3.4 HootSuite



HootSuite is a social network management tool that enables monitoring, searching and custom analysis of social traffic. Furthermore, it acts as a global aggregator of the most popular social networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Foursquare, Wordpress and Mixi) and allows users to participate in their social networks through one single point. In particular, HootSuite can be used as a Twitter handler to send and schedule Tweets, create list and keyword tracking streams, as well as monitor Mentions, Direct Messages, Sent Tweets, Favorited Tweets, and more in dedicated streams. In the same manner, HootSuite's advanced Facebook functionality includes posting updating, adding images, monitoring feeds etc. Finally, HootSuite can also support groups of users within an SME by assigning specific roles for each user through the HootSuite Teams. Hence, it can be deployed by large SMEs in order to manage complex campaigns – including Profiles, Pages, Events, Groups, and Search.

Purpose: Aggregator, Enhancement, Monitoring

Available at: <http://hootsuite.com>

## 3.4 Qualitative evaluation

In all evaluation phases, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were formulated through brain-storming and pilot testing sessions, and are presented in the following:

### Phase1: Deployment of InterSocial tools

*Note to facilitator: please get feedback both for all the provided tools in general and on each tool separately.*

1. How easy was to it to embed the provided tools in your SME activities?
2. Did you embed all the provided tools? For each tool you haven't used, please describe why you did not?
3. What level of effort was required to deploy the provided tools? How would you improve the

<p>process?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Did the deployment of the tools result in changes of your social media policy? If yes, please describe them.</li> <li>5. How much time did you invest on the deployment of the provided tools. What was the most time-consuming task?</li> <li>6. Did you find the provided training/instructions activities useful? How would you improve the process? How easy would the deployment be without the provided training?</li> </ol>
<b>Phase2: User experience with tools (week 2)</b>
<p><i>Note to facilitator: please get feedback both for all the provided tools in general and on each tool separately.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How useful did you find the provided tools?</li> <li>2. How easy was it to use the provided tools?</li> <li>3. How did the provided tools support you in achieving your objectives? Please provide examples.</li> <li>4. What are the 3 things you like best and least about the tools?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Positive:</li> <li>b. Negative:</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. If you could make one significant change to each of the tools what change would you make?</li> <li>6. How much time did you invest on the usage of the provided tools. What was the most time-consuming task?</li> <li>7. Did the deployment of the tools result in changes of your social media policy? If yes, please describe them.</li> </ol>
<b>Phase3: Impact of tools on business goals (week 3)</b>
<p><i>Note to facilitator: please get feedback both for all the provided tools in general and on each tool separately.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did the provided tools support you in achieving your business goals? Please provide examples. <i>(note to facilitator: how and how much + which goals)</i></li> <li>2. Do you intent to keep using the provided tools in the future? Please explain why or why not.</li> <li>3. Would you recommend the provided tools to other SMEs? Please explain why or why not.</li> <li>4. How much time did you invest on the usage of the provided tools. What was the most time-consuming task?</li> <li>5. Did the deployment of the tools result in changes of your social media policy? If yes, please describe them.</li> <li>6. Please describe the ideal social media tool that would support your business goals.</li> </ol>

### 3.5 Quantitative evaluation

A number of SM presence and activity metrics were monitored for all participating SMEs. To this end, we used the Klout for Business service<sup>2</sup>, Facebook Insights and the Twenty Feet service<sup>3</sup>. All in all, we collected the following metrics:

- Klout score: is a number between 1 and 100 that represents SM influence. The more influential one is, the higher his Klout score. The score analyzes SM activity in multiple networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Google+ etc) and computes the Klout score using an algorithm that is not public. However, Klout is among the most popular ways to measure SM presence and influence currently.
- Metrics related to SME official Facebook Page
  - Number of posts

<sup>2</sup> <http://klout.com/home>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.twentyfeet.com/>

- Lifetime likes: the total number of people who have liked the page (unique users)
- Daily page engaged users: the number of people who engaged with the page. Engagement includes any click or story created. (unique users)
- Daily total reach: the number of people who have seen any content associated with the page. (unique Users)
- Daily total impressions: the number of impressions seen of any content associated with the Page. (total count)
- Daily logged-in page views: page views from users logged into Facebook (total count)
- Daily reach of page posts: the number of people who saw any of the page posts. (unique Users)
- Daily total consumers: the number of people who clicked on any of the page content. Stories that are created without clicking on page content (e.g., liking the page from timeline) are not included. (unique users)
- Daily page consumptions: the number of clicks on any of the page content. Stories generated without clicks on page content (e.g., liking the page in timeline) are not included. (total count)
- Daily count of fans online: the number of people who liked the page and who were online on the specified day. (unique users)
- Metrics related to SME official twitter account
  - Number of tweets
  - Number of followers

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Qualitative evaluation

Qualitative evaluation was mainly based on interviews with SMEs representatives and on observations of SM interaction that took place for each SME during the deployment of the tools. In the weekly meetings the evaluation team had been discussing interesting issues that were derived from the interviews and kept notes towards the production of a detailed qualitative analysis.

According to the evaluation methodology, the three phases of tools deployment resulted in three different semi-structured interviews between the SMEs representatives and the evaluators. Each interview focused on gathering information for deployment of the tools, user experience and impact of social networking correspondently. In this context, the evaluation of the deployment of social networking tools was derived initially from the first phase, even though the final evaluation results of the deployment took into consideration the whole evaluation procedure. These results are reported at the deliverables D4.2.2: “Evaluation of the deployment of tools for social web local enhancement” and D.4.3.2: “Evaluation of the deployment and adaptation of monitoring tools”. The rest two evaluation objectives are presented in details in this section.

All the related semi-structured interviews of the three SMEs are included in the electronic appendix of the deliverable (files: *Questions\_Answers for semi-structure interviews\_SME1\_1-3.docx*, *Questions\_Answers for semi-structure interviews\_SME2\_1-3.docx*, *Questions\_Answers for semi-structure interviews\_SME3\_1-3.docx*). The answers in the documents have been written by the facilitators in a “quick and dirty” manner as they were interpreting and summarizing the discussions with the SMEs representatives.

In the next section, an overall qualitative evaluation for each SME is presented. Then the report focuses on the particular evaluation lines of the deployment and user experience of social networking tools, and the impact of social networking on business objectives.

#### 4.1.1 Qualitative evaluation of each participating SME

##### **SME1: Brief qualitative analysis of tools deployment based on semi-structured interviews**

SME1 is a very small SME in the market of research on computer science. The SME runs research programs related to software quality assessment/evaluation, with special emphasis on educational technology.

Before the deployment of the tools, the SME stated that through their presence in SM they aim at promoting their research, networking and attracting project partners. An SME1 employee is responsible for the SME social media presence/content and she is the only one allowed to post through the SME’s official accounts. However, all the employees are encouraged to actively participate in producing SM content for the SME and promoting the SME social media activities to their social networks. In the initial discussions with the SME, they reported that the main problems they faced were: a) no time to engage in conversation with followers, b) hard to manage multiple social network accounts, and c) lack of ideas on what to post.

The first interview indicated that embedding the set of tools in the company's activities was easy. However, tools that pose specific requirements, such as using an Android device or a Wordpress Widget, were not embedded as they were incompatible with the company's practices. Findings indicated that the deployment of the tools motivated the staff to increase their company-related SM activities. Learning how to effectively use the provided tools was reported as the most time-consuming task. Special emphasis was placed on the provided introductory material and positive comments were raised.

Analysis of the data collected through the second interview, showed that the company was mostly interested on SM aggregators, while tools for enhancing social presence, such as Soneta, also left a positive impression. Some difficulties regarding the perceived learnability of the tools were observed, but all tools were characterized as easy to use. The Soneta tool and the aggregator were perceived as the most useful tools. In addition, the interview showed that the deployment of the tools resulted in new types of SM activities, such as searching for trends related to the SME's activities and designing campaigns in the future. Finally, it was agreed that the current SM policy of the SME was too loosely-defined and that it should be revisited.

Finally, in the last interview it was found that the perceived SM presence of the SME was increased. However, it was reported that this could be either due to the introduction of the tools themselves or the increased engagement in SM activities that came with the tools. In addition, the SME stated that the geo-location monitoring was rather inappropriate for its type of activities, but it would be really useful for SMEs that target to sale products or services in specific locations. In addition, it was reported that the single-person-interface of the aggregator matched very well with its SM policy. It was also stated that aggregating information from multiple networks and enabling easy posting to multiple networks are the most useful functionalities. Finally, it was found that personalization of SM monitoring and enhancement tools would be advisable.

All in all, the semi-structured interviews used in the context of this study allowed for acquiring some useful remarks from the SME regarding the overall deployment and the project's main question: "Can the deployment of such tools enhance the overall social presence of an SME?". Following, we summarize the main findings of this case study:

- This very small SME had an existing policy and a person responsible for its SM activities. However, it was rather loosely-defined and through the deployment of the provided media tools the SME was given a chance to evaluate and improve it.
- In the end of the study, the SME employee reported an increased perceived SM presence of the SME. Although we cannot be certain that this can be attributed only to the deployment of the tools (to ensure ecological validity we did not choose an experimental design), this is an important finding since it can motivate an SME's employees to engage in SM activities.
- The geo-location functionality was perceived to be interesting but not required for this type of SME. It was argued that such functionality would be very useful for SMEs that target to sale products or services in specific locations. It seems

that depending on the SME type, personalization of the provided type of functionalities is required.

- The company's participation in the case study resulted in new types of SM activities, such as searching for trends related to the SME's activities and designing campaigns in the future.
- The provided introductory material was perceived to be of high quality but also not very important for this SME. This might be because the employee responsible for the SME's social media activities was rather familiar with the concepts and processes introduced.

To conclude, in the beginning of the study this SME started with a rather loosely-defined SM policy and a positive attitude towards usage of social networks for its business activities. After the case study, the SME decided modifications to its strategy and its positive attitude towards SM networks was reinforced. In general, the SME's perception was that the deployment of SMI tools enhanced its social presence, even in the context of a short time period. Moreover, the SME was positive for the Return Of Investment (ROI) in SM and considered investing additional resources on its SM activities.

#### **SME2: Brief qualitative analysis of tools deployment based on semi-structured interviews**

SME2 is a very small SME in the market of Software Development Companies. The Company is focused on Web Development and its customers usually come through company's friends and old customers.

SME2 activities in social networks were limited due to human availability issues while the company's founders did not actually believe in ROI of social presence. Two persons were mainly responsible for social networking.

The main goal set before the deployment of the SM tools was to establish the company's brand in the market of software houses. That was actually a very long-term goal and it was an already known fact that during the deployment of the tools this goal could not be reached.

The first interview indicated that embedding the set of tools in the company's activities was easy. The first impression on the tools usage gave SME2 the opportunity to understand the power of social networks and to take the company's social presence more seriously than before. Special emphasis was placed on the introductory material which was reported to be of high quality and usefulness.

Analysis of the data collected through the second interview, showed that the company was mostly interested on SM aggregators, while tools for enhancing social presence, such as Soneta, also left a positive impression. Usability was highlighted as a very important issue in the deployment. All the deployment tools were characterized as easy to use tools. However, their perceived usefulness varied, with the aggregator being perceived the most useful, and the Soneta tool the second most useful. Finally, the interview showed that in the middle of the case study the company had already changed its attitude towards SM and agreed that its business objectives related to SM have to be revisited in order to take advantage of social networks and to start measuring its actual impact.

Finally, the last interview confirmed the aforementioned findings and showed that the SME improved its understanding in terms of its SM needs. The company stated that geo-location monitoring and targeting is an interesting functionality, but its main need is for social aggregators that can support all its SM activities through a single point of view. It was also commented that the social aggregator can save much time for the company, since it allows multi-posting to several social networks.

All in all, the semi-structured interviews used in the context of this study allowed for acquiring some useful remarks from the SME regarding the overall deployment and the project's main question: "Can the deployment of such tools enhance the overall social presence of an SME?". Following, we summarize the main findings of this case study:

- This very small SME had strong time limitations that did not allow dedication to the usage of SM tools and, in general, to a satisfactory level of participation to social networking. In this context, the deployment of such SM tools may not be valuable in terms of social presence.
- The company's participation by itself on the project opened a new window to the SM world and the founders of the company already see this world as a source of potential customers.
- Concerning the usefulness of geo-location functionality, the target of the market in which the company is focused along with its customers' profile seemed to play a critical role. Although this SME found such functionality interesting, the founders of the SME argued that enhancing web presence through the usage of geo-related tools is not necessary for this company's type of activities.
- The introduction of a tool plays a very critical role in the deployment process. The case study with this SME demonstrated that the initial usage scenarios that were provided together with the tools helped the company to easily embed the tools into the company's current activities. It was also found that the available functionality for SM marketing (e.g. campaigns) which is provided by other tools, either commercial or not, would be helpful as well. However, for each functionality introduced, it is necessary to first propose some scenarios suitable for the particular company.
- This case study also showed that a SM marketing expert would be easily acceptable by this company. However, since this is a very expensive investment for this small SME, this skill is going to be added to the required skills of the next offered job.

All in all, in the beginning of the study this SME started with a rather neutral attitude towards usage of social networking for its business activities, However, through its participation in this case study, this attitude was turned to positive and the SME was motivated to systematically use SM monitoring tools (such as the ones provided) to identify related opportunities. However, the SME was not sure that the deployment of SM tools can enhance its social presence. Moreover, the SME argued that Return Of Investment (ROI) in SM might be in an unsatisfactory level for such type of a company.

### **SME3: Brief qualitative analysis of tools deployment based on semi-structured interviews**

SME3 group is a relatively small SME with main activities focused around web development as well as providing web and mobile marketing services to their customers. In addition, they frequently launch and manage various Business-to-Consumer (B2C) e-commerce projects. Two of these projects are an online travel agency (PROJECT A) and an online coupon and deal offering platform (PROJECT B).

Before participating in this study, the company owner stated explicitly that they were convinced about the Return of investment (ROI) of SM engagement. Regarding the two aforementioned projects SM was an ideal platform for SME3 to promote their products. They gradually abandoned more traditional web-based marketing strategies (e.g. Google ads, banner campaigns) on which they relied for many years in favor of SM campaigns. Their main goal in regard to SM was to increase their reach by widening their customer base. Their hope was that by increasing page likes in Facebook more customers would be seeing their offers which would hopefully be translated into more sales. They believed that one of the most important advantages of SM is that it allows them to communicate with their target customer base more effectively. In contrast to traditional web marketing, their followers/fans voluntarily chose to follow them and therefore stated implicitly that they are interested in the kind of products/services SME3 has to offer.

Being strong believers in the benefits of SM the company spends about an hour everyday posting 4-5 times for each of their projects mainly on Facebook. Four staff member are responsible for posting on the PROJECT A and three on the PROJECT B timeline. Their posts were selected from the company's RSS feed and were almost always accompanied by promotional pictures. Although the company had a clear overall strategy for using SM, they did not set measurable achievable goals on a frequent basis that would allow them to measure their success. They occasionally monitored and measured their post effectiveness by studying Facebook insights, mainly focusing on simple metrics such as "overall page likes".

The first interview indicated that embedding the set of tools in the company's activities was relatively easy. However, they could not perform an in-depth examination of the provided tools due to time constraints on their part. However, the time spent with the tools triggered a renewed interest in examining more effective ways to use SM. They became interested and asked for more information about how to use the tools and identify appropriate ways to use Twitter. They reported that until this point they found it difficult to integrate Twitter into their activities mainly because they could not find the needed time to experiment and study online information about others's good practices. During the first phase, they used mainly the monitoring tools to search for posts by their competition in order to create an understanding of appropriate Twitter usage.

Analysis of the data collected after the second interview, showed that the company was mostly interested in monitoring and enhancement tools. In particular, they found geolocation monitoring conceptually useful although they struggled a little with the usability of the provided tools. Tools that did not offer additional information or functionality the company already managed to get through other ways (e.g. twitter search, facebook insights) were evaluated negatively and abandoned quickly. For this reason the company did not use the aggregators in order to post on multiple social networks since

they did that already through their RSS feed. They became, however, interested in aggregators for the purpose of monitoring multiple networks and their competition, and identifying local trends and relevant conversations.

Finally, results analysis after the last interview showed that the company had found its way to use twitter effectively. They managed to increase their followers by 130 in a matter of weeks. They experimented by using the tools (geo-location monitoring, monitoring competition, trend analysis) to find and engage with conversations relevant to their projects. In addition, they inquired information from the Web in regard to a problem they had with their posts not showing in the twitter search. The experimentation with the SM tools helped them formulate strategies about effective usage of a social network that they were not actively engaged in the past. Apart from that, the deployment of the SM tools did not affect the activities or policies of the company. Even though they found some of the tools very interesting, they stated that they intent to use them only infrequently in the future. It seems that for this company information about how to use the various SM effectively was valued more than specific features of a SM tool (e.g. posting to several social networks, monitoring).

All in all, the semi-structured interviews used in the context of this study allowed for acquiring some useful remarks from the SME regarding the overall deployment and the project's main question: "Can the deployment of such tools enhance the overall social presence of an SME?". Following, we summarize the main findings of this case study:

- The employees in this company serve multiple functions and therefore have little time to discover new and innovative ways to engage with SM or to learn to use new social networks. They needed concrete information about good practices and guidelines on effective social network use in order to be able to streamline their activities. For that reason the provided tools, were reported to have a limited effect on their activities.
- The most important impact of the SM tools introduction to this company was that they triggered a new interest for Twitter. Throughout the study, the reported time spent on Twitter as well as on researching SM increased, but their activity on Facebook remained approximately similar to the pre-study levels.
- This company was mostly intrigued by the monitoring features of the introduced tools. They found the geolocation monitoring feature particularly interesting because it allowed them to search for trending conversations in specific areas of Greece. They also used the tools to monitor post and tweets of their competitors. They used this information to see what kind of deals were gaining attraction and what words and phrases the competition used in their posts/tweets. This allowed them to modify their own messages to be closer to what their customers expected and were seeking.
- Although during the study they had no problem overcoming usability problems with some of the tools, they explicitly stated that under normal circumstances they would not do so. They also stated that they would not use tools that require a long learning period except if they were absolutely

convinced that they would gain a specific advantage by using them. Another important factor was tool reputation and the proliferation of training material (online tutorials, support forums etc.)

- During the study, they inquired information about rather “untraditional” Social Networks, such as Pinterest. They wondered whether the tools could also help them engage effectively with such networks. This again underpins the need of this company to gather information about new social networks and appropriate ways to use them to support their overall SM strategy.

To conclude, this company was enthusiastic about SM before the study and remains so after it. The main change was in regard to Twitter which they started using effectively partly due to their involvement in this study. They did not use SM tools before and their deployment in the context of this study presented new possibilities. Although they reported that they will not continue using them on a regular basis, they are convinced that the tools will help them during periods in which they will dedicate resources to experiment with SM and in order to discover new ways of engaging with their customers. Although they were interested in enhancing their social presence, they did not modify their existing policies (e.g. identifying which time their followers are online in order to schedule their posts accordingly) nor did they start setting small achievable goals on a weekly basis in order to measure their success. They were mostly interested in expanding their activities to other social networks, a task to which the provided SM tools offer limited support.

#### 4.1.2 Qualitative evaluation of the deployment of social networking tools

In general, the interviews on the deployment of tools collected positive feedback for the provided SM tools. However, in some cases tools that were not cross-platform and tools that could not fit into specific usage scenarios of the SMEs were other underused.

Observations of the deployment phase of the social networking tools showed that in small enterprises the introduction of the tool plays a critical role for a successful deployment. Almost all the participants admitted that the initial boost from the responsible person for tool introduction was both very helpful and necessary. In this context it seems that the first experience with a SM tool has to take into consideration the SMEs particularities.

Furthermore, the key point of the deployment seems to be the production and the provision of specific scenarios of usage. These scenarios have to reflect cases that are suitable for the SME and, which can be of great value in establishing a connection between social networking and the internal business logic of an SME. In this way SMEs are provided the opportunity to find out new ways to exploit social networks and to initialize a new policy regarding their social network presence.

Training material that introduces the SM tools and helps the SMEs to start using them is also required. This material should include exemplary scenarios of usage that are adapted to each SME profile.

Finally, tools that are not accessible through different platforms and devices may be not be suitable for usage in many SMEs that are using particular Operating Systems and Devices for social networking.

Additional details on this evaluation goal can be found at deliverables D4.2.2. and D4.3.2.

#### **4.1.3 Qualitative evaluation of user experience**

After the second interview with the SMEs representatives, it was found that in most of the cases SMEs started to understand the actual value of each tool and to evaluate it in the context of their company. Thus, many positive or negative comments about the tools utility were provided. In our attempt to assess the whole user experience we took into consideration issues related to usability, utility, accessibility and innovation (as was perceived by the representatives).

Concerning usability almost all tools were commented as “easy to use” tools, although one of them had been provided in its first version. As it was expected this new tool had the most neutral comments but newest versions were provided later in order to fix the initial issues.

Utility issues were most frequently highlighted by the participating SMEs. In this context, the actual utility of two of the four tools was not obvious and suitable for the SMEs. Although the introduction of the tools had a positive impact on the SMEs, only two of the tools were perceived as “appropriate tools for each SME”. Moreover, when localization was being considered, SMEs did not find a way to actually exploit the particular tools to enhance local social presence. It should be mentioned that the utility of the tools can be assessed by SMEs when they are able to fully understand their functionality and the actual scenarios that can take place in their businesses. Otherwise, tools that seem very functional may be characterized as inappropriate under a particular perspective of assessment.

In terms of accessibility, social networking tools should be accessible regardless of the platform and the device used. Small SMEs that have invested and are used to working with particular technologies cannot be easily convinced to move to a different set of technologies just for using a social networking tool. The Return Of Investment is not obvious for them in advance and thus they cannot afford new costs for such reasons. In our case one tool required a particular platform that was not available to the participating SMEs, and they weren’t eager to invest on using a different platform for the needs of this tool.

Perceived innovation (or first known functionality) was also a catalyst to like the provided tools. For instance, aggregators were most frequently commented as usable tools since they can reduce time through multi-posting and monitoring via a single interface. Extra capabilities such as reporting of social activities, geo-location searching, and social campaigns triggered the interest of SMEs and was reported to influence their assessment of each tool. In this context, SMEs felt positive for a geo-location tool although they could not specify how they would use it for their business needs and goals.

#### **4.1.4 Qualitative evaluation of impact of social networking on business objectives.**

Due to the diversity of both areas of interests and SM profile of the participating SMEs, the SME objectives that were set do not allow generalizations regarding overall

impact. In particular, these objectives varied from the establishment of a SME Brand name in social networks to the gaining of new customers. In this context, it is not possible to make generalizations about the overall impact. However, a common observation regarding the impact of social networking on the participating SME's business objectives was that the study engaged them in more or even new SM activities. Such an engagement, can by itself move SMEs a step forward in achieving their objectives.

Apart from this engagement, a common feeling is that the perceived SM presence of all the SMEs was increased. In addition, for two of the SMEs it was mentioned that the geo-location monitoring was rather inappropriate for their type of activities, but it would be really useful for SMEs that target to sale products or services in specific locations. Indeed, the third SME that offered such products and services, reported that this functionality was more useful.

However, although it would not be safe to conclude that social networking had a positive impact on the SMEs objectives, the last interview confirmed that the SMEs improved their understanding in terms of their SM needs. As an example, two of the SMEs stated that social aggregators could probably save much time, while the other SME argued that the study resulted in finding the way to use Twitter effectively. The experimentation with the SM tools helped SMEs formulate strategies as well as create tactics about effective usage of a SM on which they were not actively engaged in the past. Finally, the study gave SMEs the opportunity to understand their current status in social networks, what their audience is, what the available SM tools functionalities are , and how they can try to achieve their objectives through social networking.

## 4.2 Quantitative evaluation

The quantitative evaluations are mostly based on measurements that have been taken on a frequent basis during the evaluation. In particular, the initial measurement took place after the first interview with the SMEs, while the rest quantitative data were collected after the end of each phase of the study. Quantitative data were collected through various tools (see Section 3.5) which were configured to continuously log SMEs traffic (with their given permission).

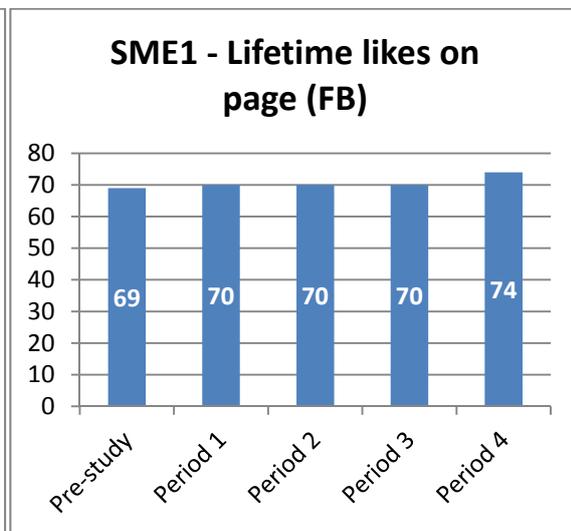
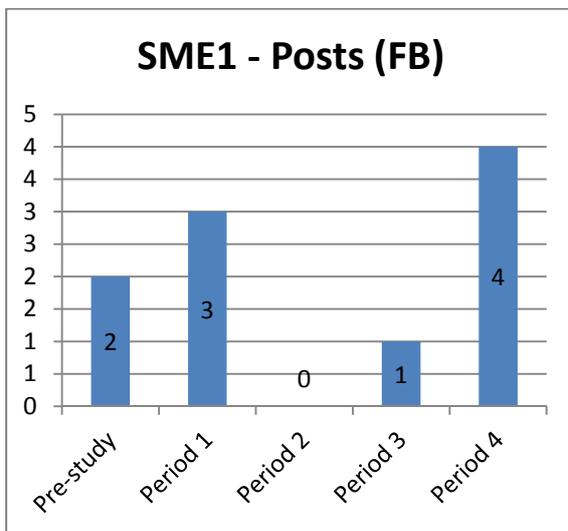
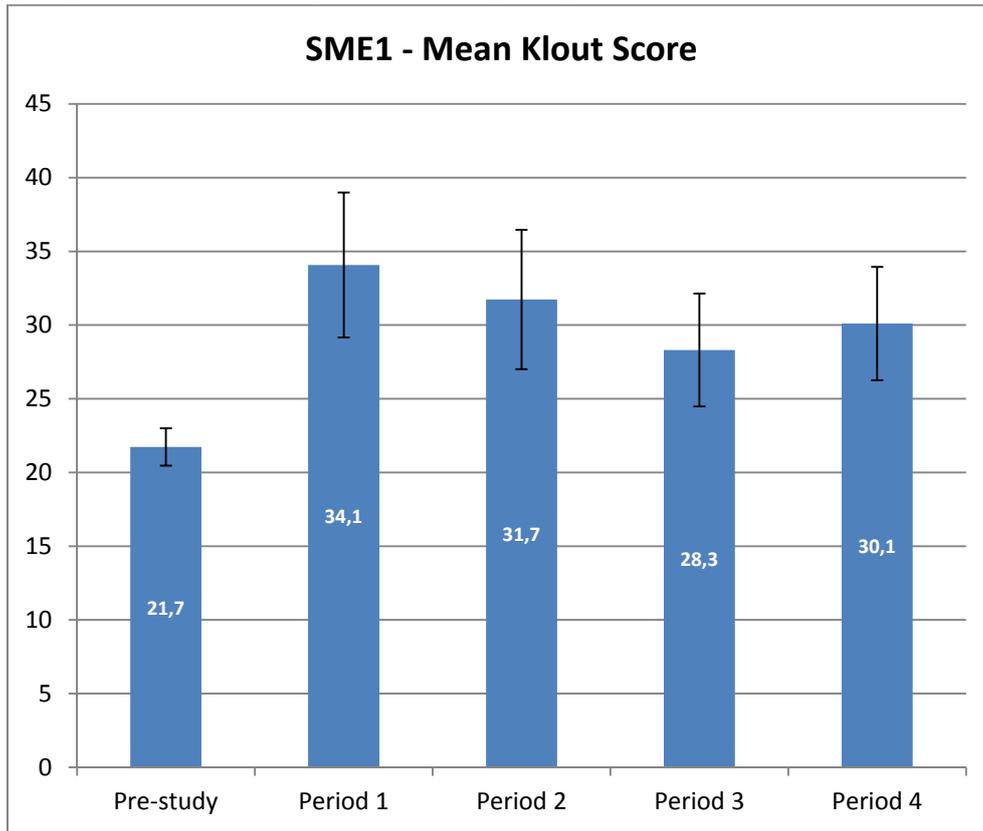
As we have already mentioned, making generalizations from this particular study should be avoided since there was a huge diversity in the profiles of the participating SMEs, from the area of activities to the way they operate and from their business logic to the current SM status. Thus, the following graphs should be interpreted on a per case basis.

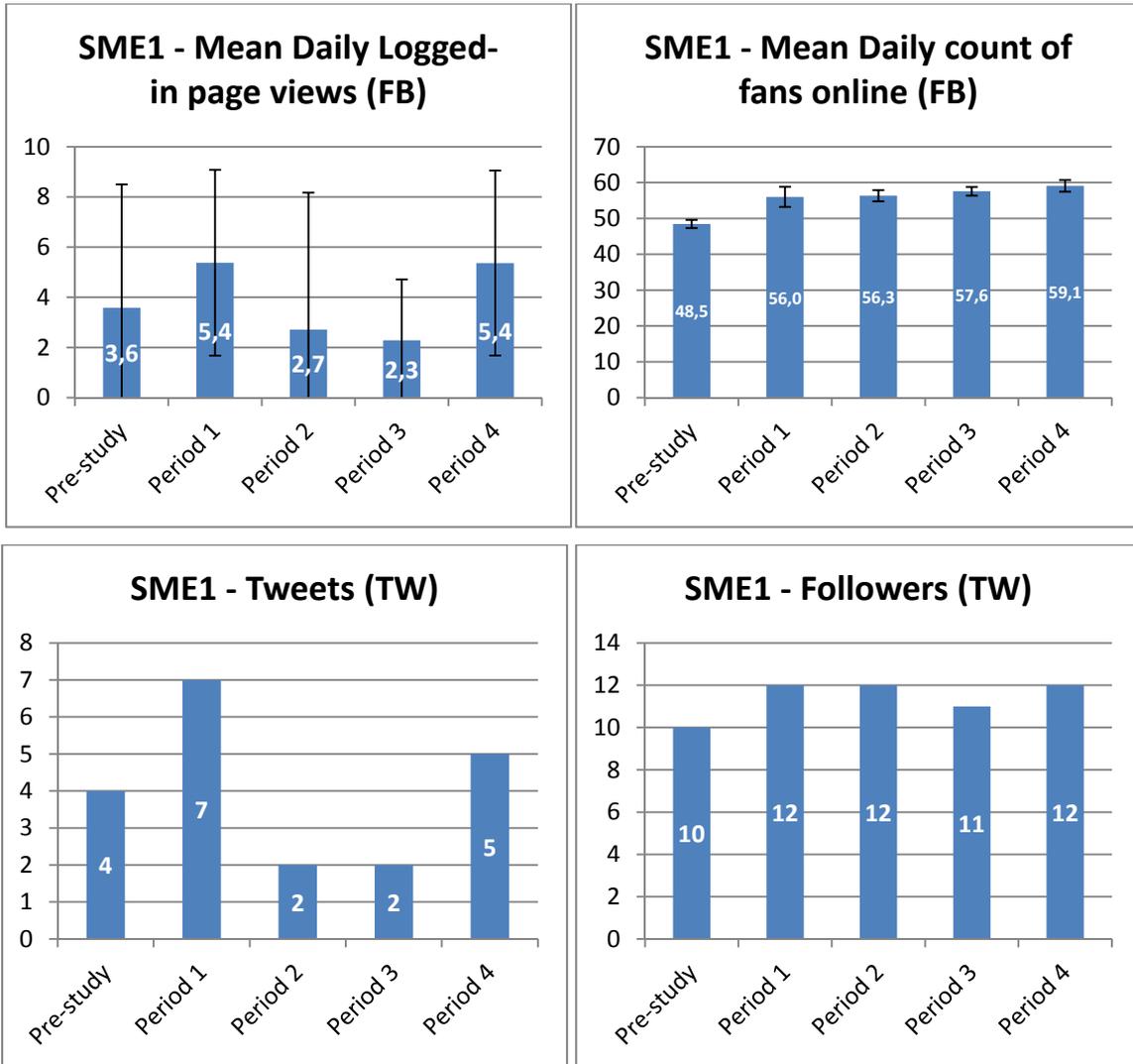
However, a number of observations that one could make from these graphs are summarized in the following:

- After the end of the study, all the participating SMEs increased their social presence as quantified by the Klout score. Taking into consideration the qualitative observations as well (see previous sections), one can tentatively argue that the SMEs' engagement in social networking in the context of this project boosted their social presence.
- The first two SMEs presented a small increase in their overall social activities and responses from their audience. This is depicted in the corresponding graphs showing page views, likes, and twitter followers. However, it should be mentioned that during the study period the third SME decided to invest on some paid Facebook campaigns, which could have also affected the collected data. However, shows that SM tools with appropriate campaign functionality could help enterprises to achieve their social network goals in a rather brief period of time.
- Some decreases in the number of posts in particular periods are probably related to some reported specific situations related to companies' activities (e.g. being abroad for business purposes, being too busy for a period etc). The latter further reinforces the need for designing studies that are ecologically valid in this context. Despite such situations, the overall trends related to social presence metrics are positive.

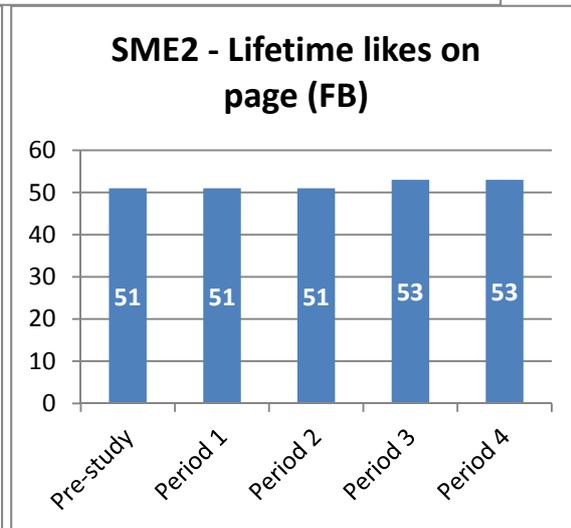
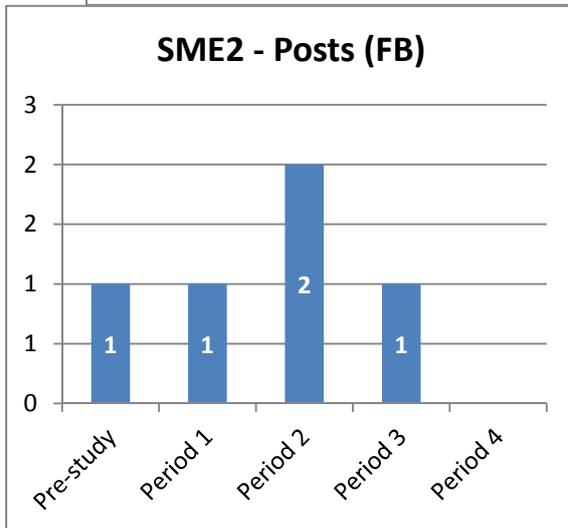
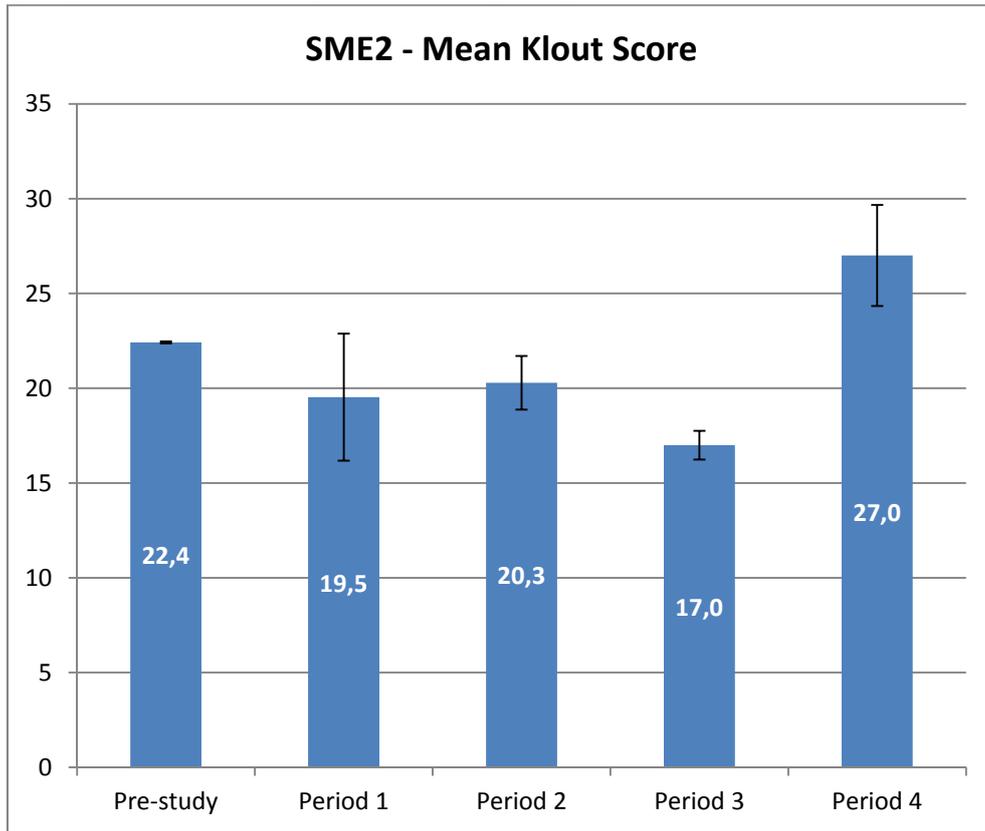
Next, we present graphical representations of SM activity per SME. The following metrics are included in the graphs: Klout score, Facebook Posts, Likes, Pageviews, Tweets and Followers. These graphs are a subset of the quantitative graphs that were produced and are included in the electronic appendix of this deliverable (file: *Quantitative Analysis\_All.xlsx*). Moreover, some extra statistics that are based on qualitative evaluation analysis and concern overall SM tools usage time, problems, and declared needs are presented as well. These graphs can also be found in the electronic appendix of this deliverable (file: *Qualitative Analysis\_Statistics.xlsx*)

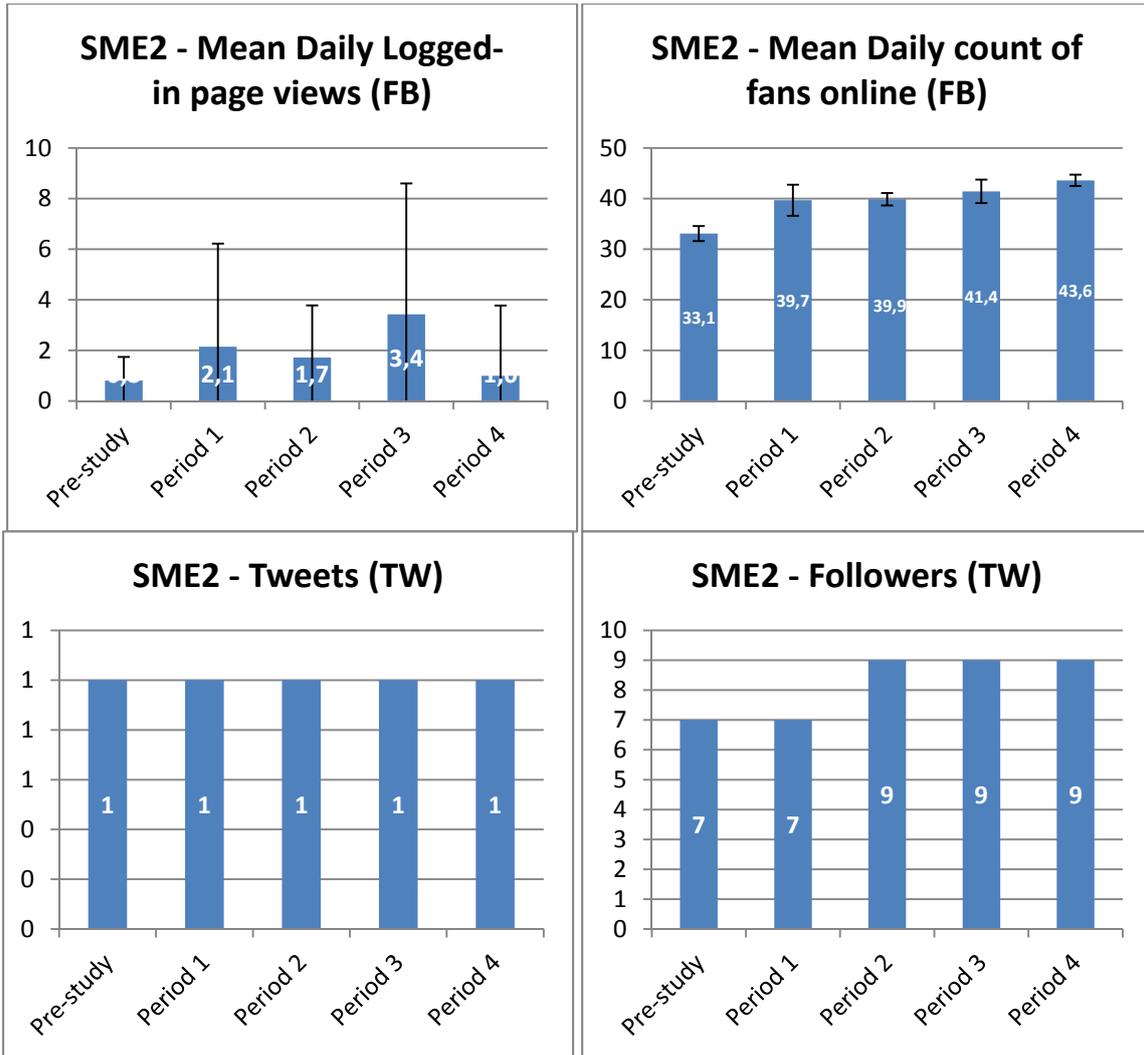
*Graphs for quantitative social presence analysis of SME1*



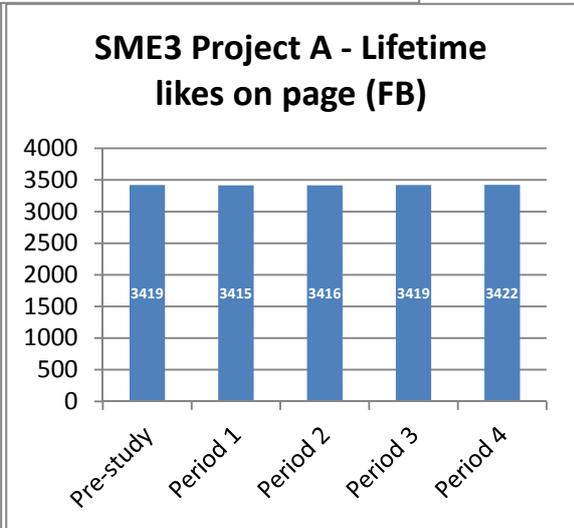
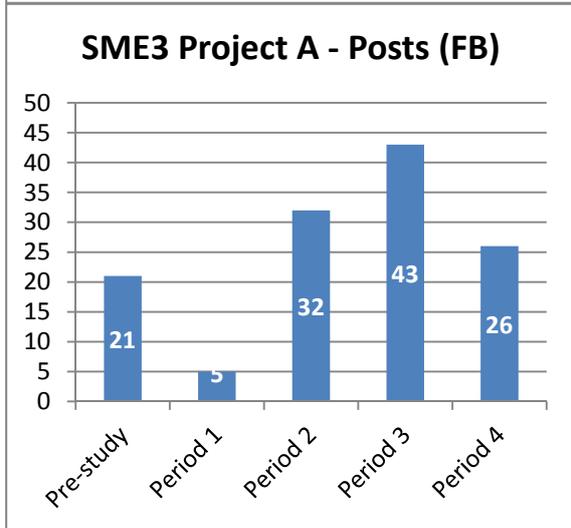
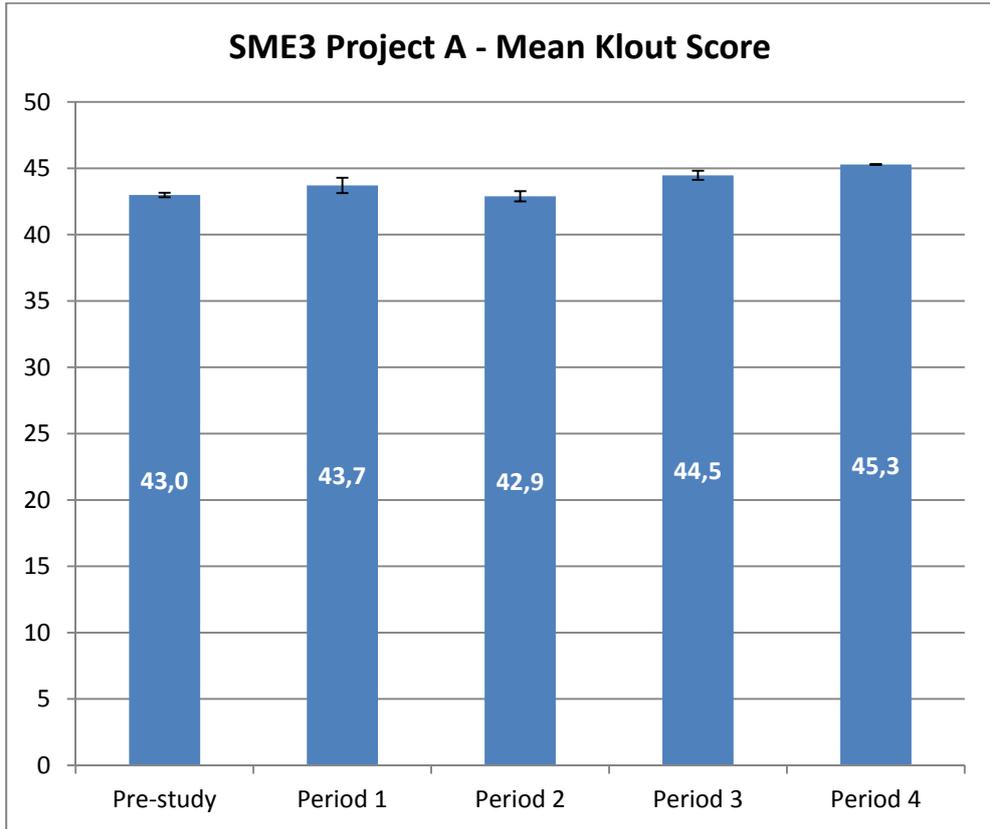


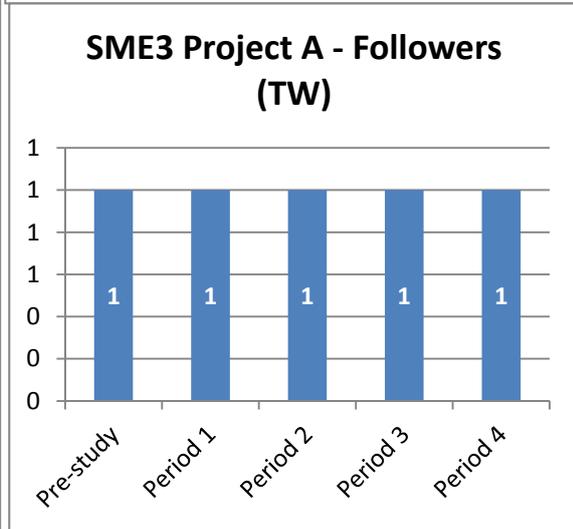
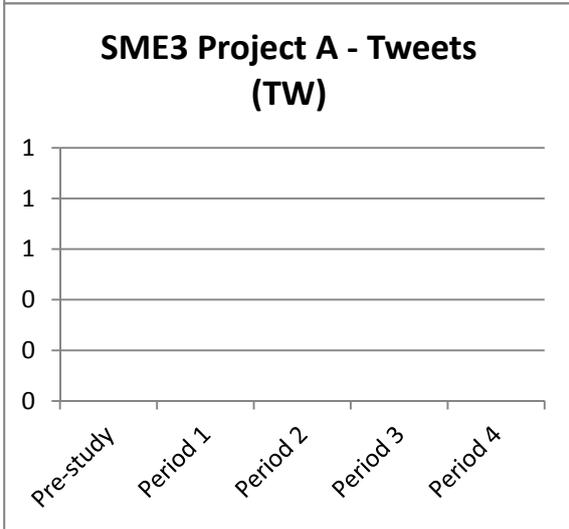
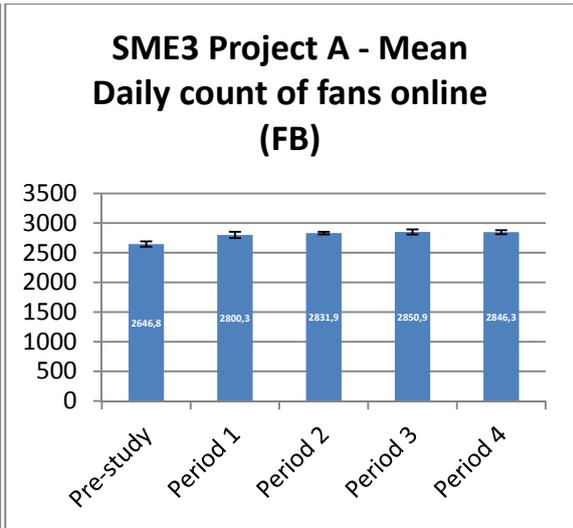
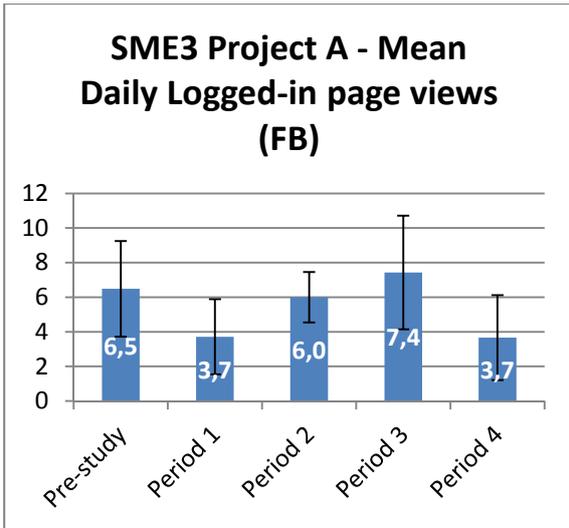
**Graphs for quantitative social presence analysis of SME2**



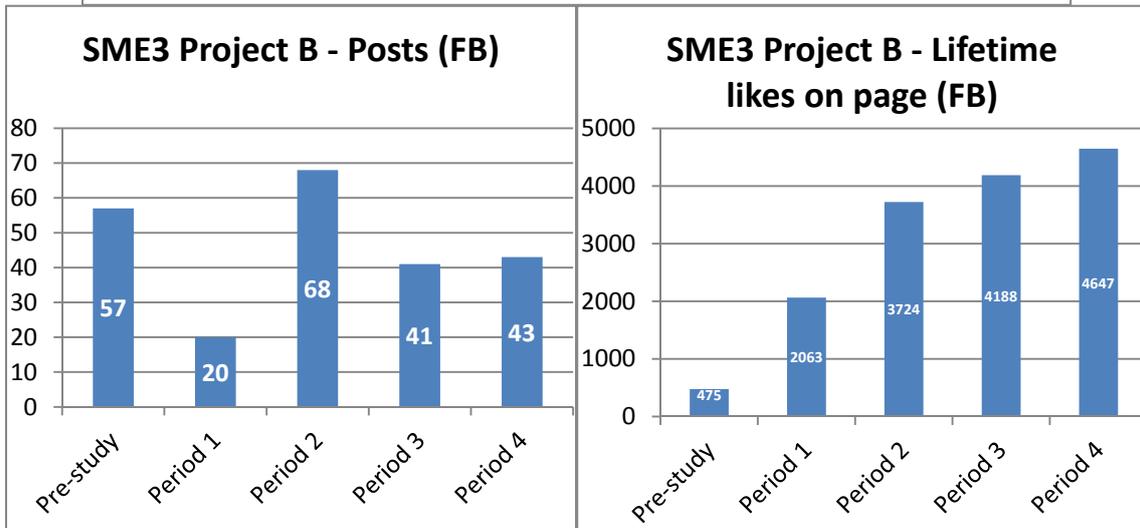
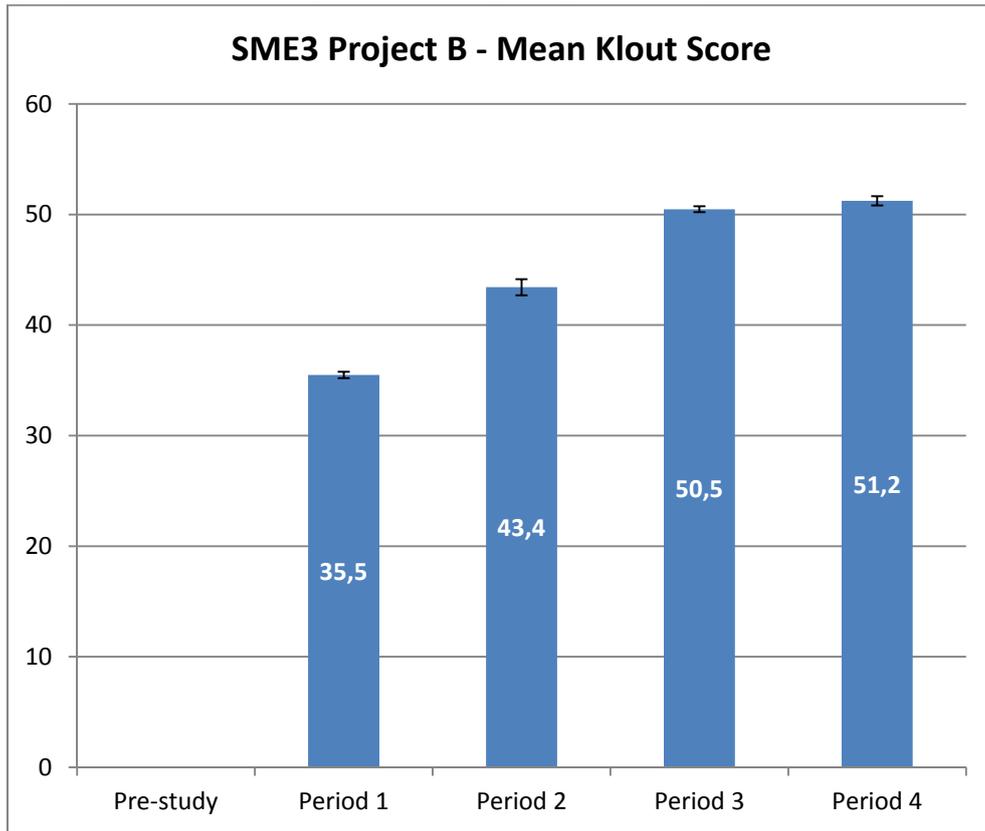


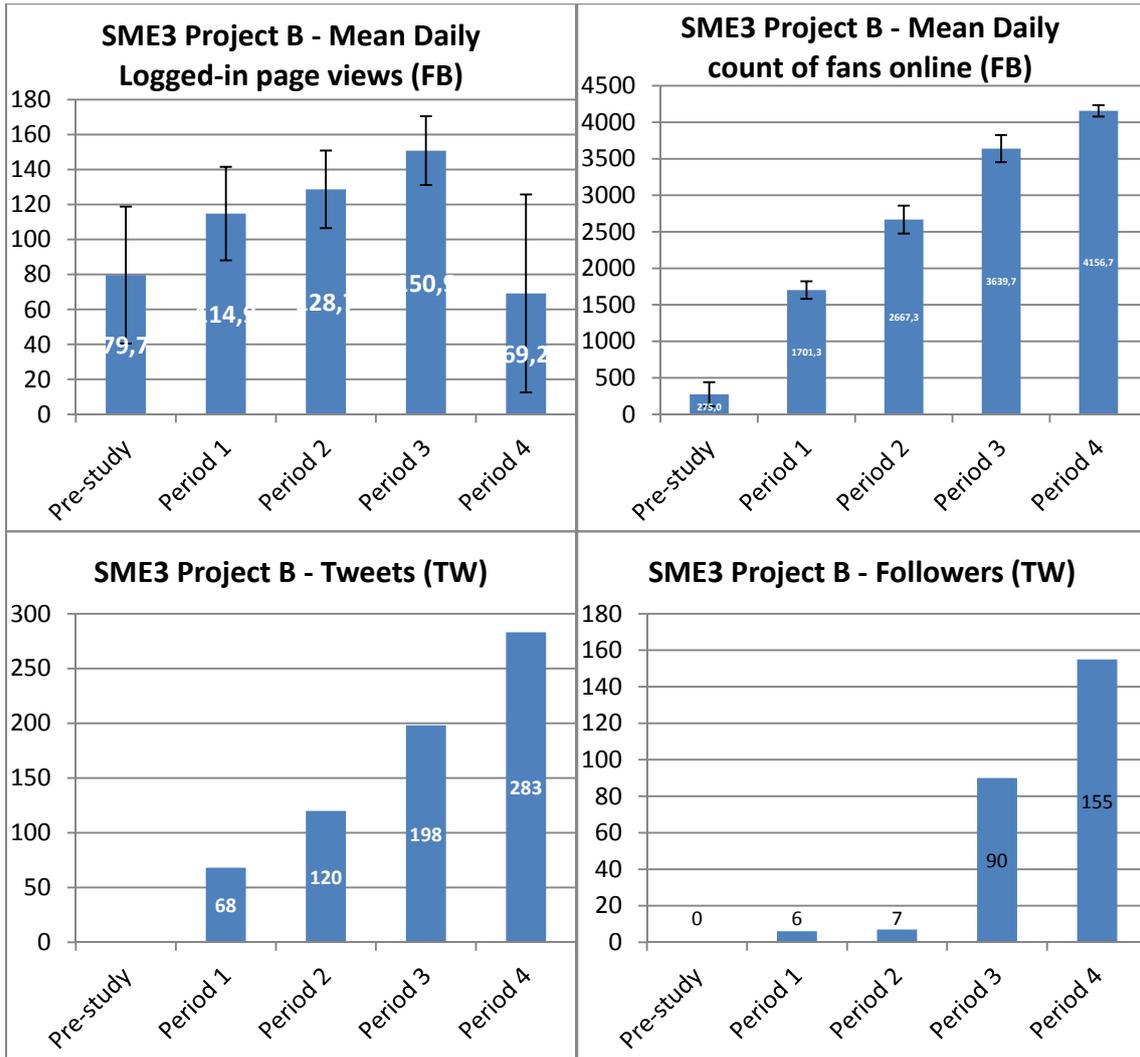
**Graphs for quantitative social presence analysis of SME3 Project A**





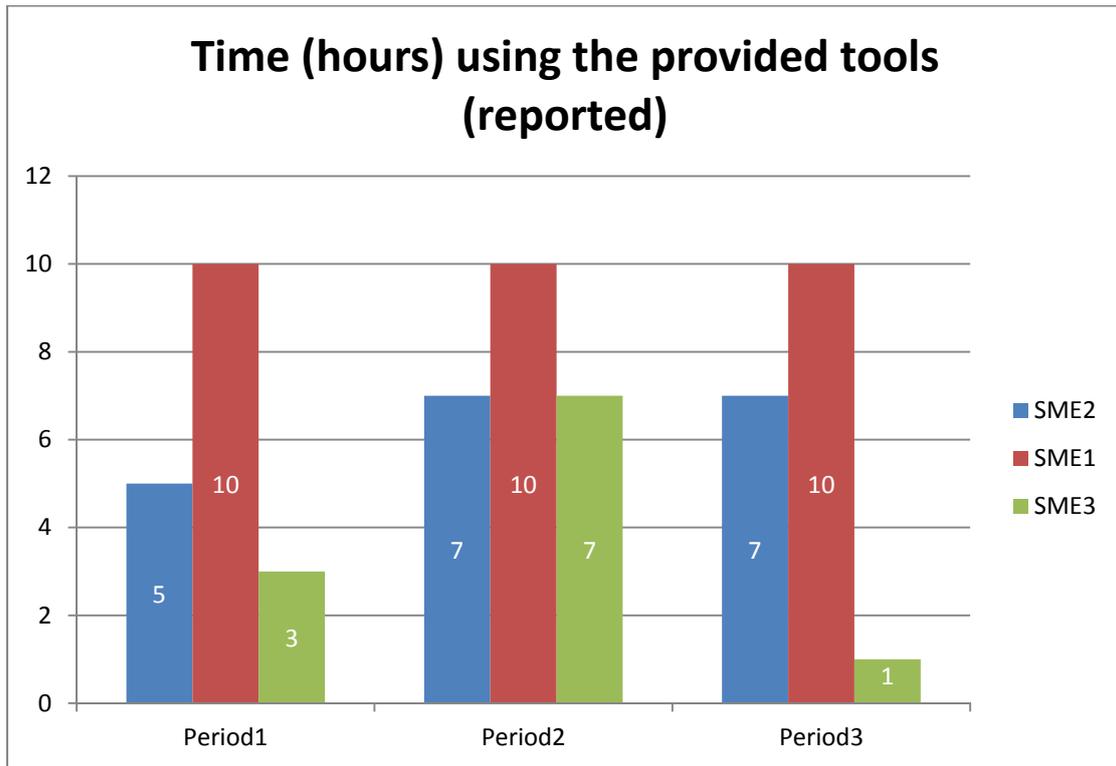
**Graphs for quantitative social presence analysis of SME3 Project B**



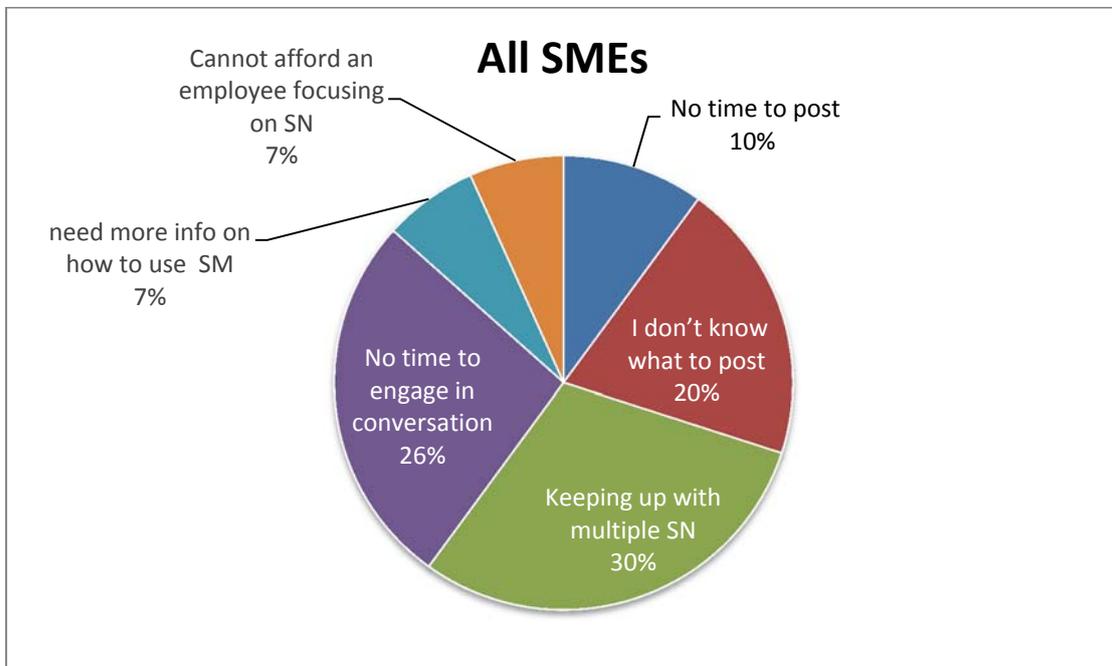


**STATISTICS FROM QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

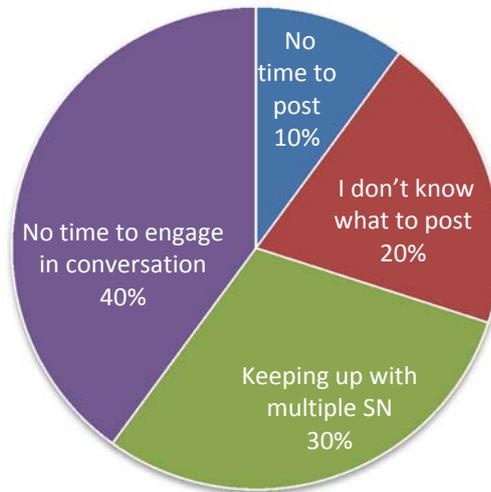
Time using tools



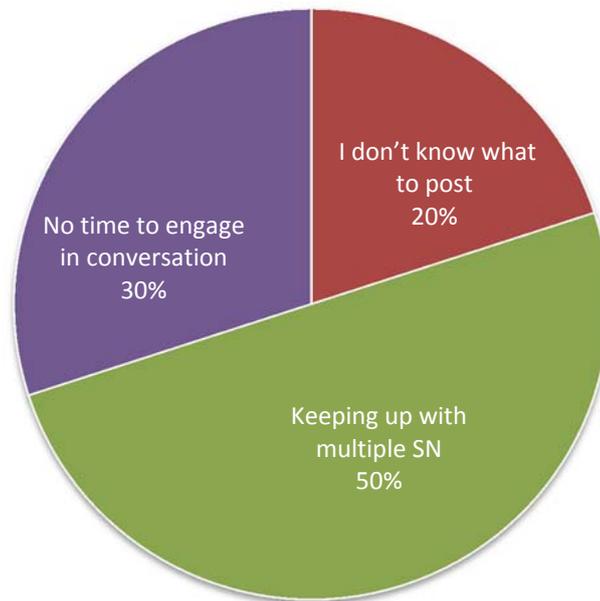
Problems with SNs

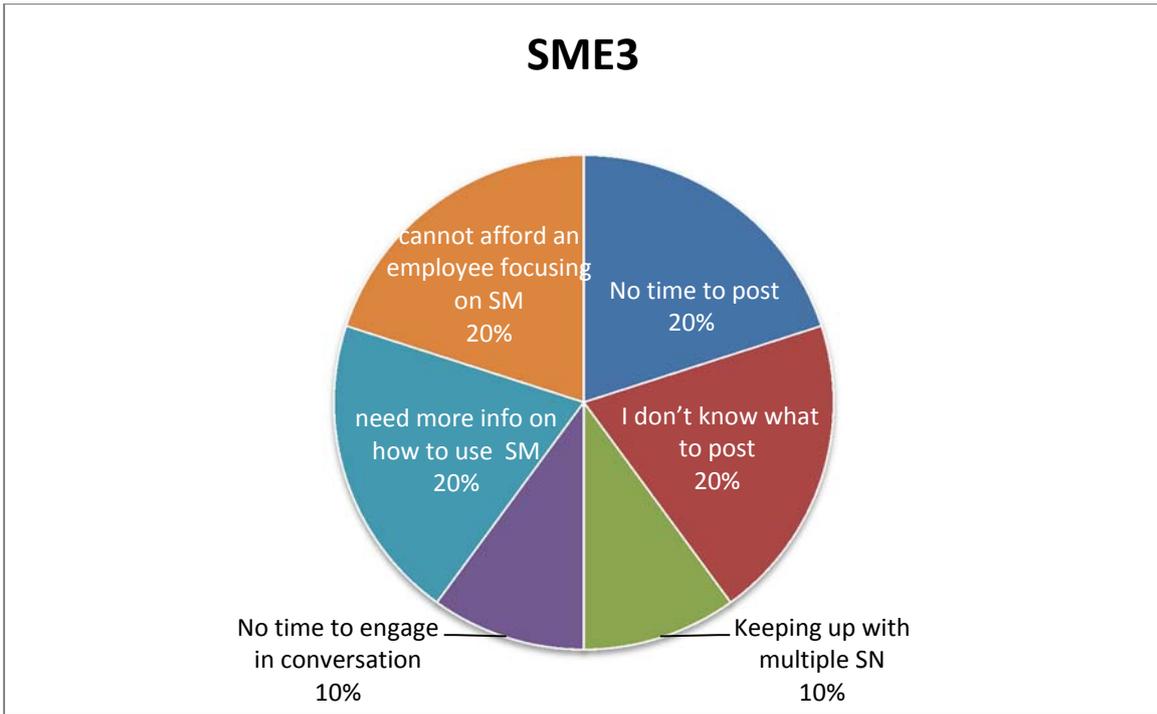


### SME1

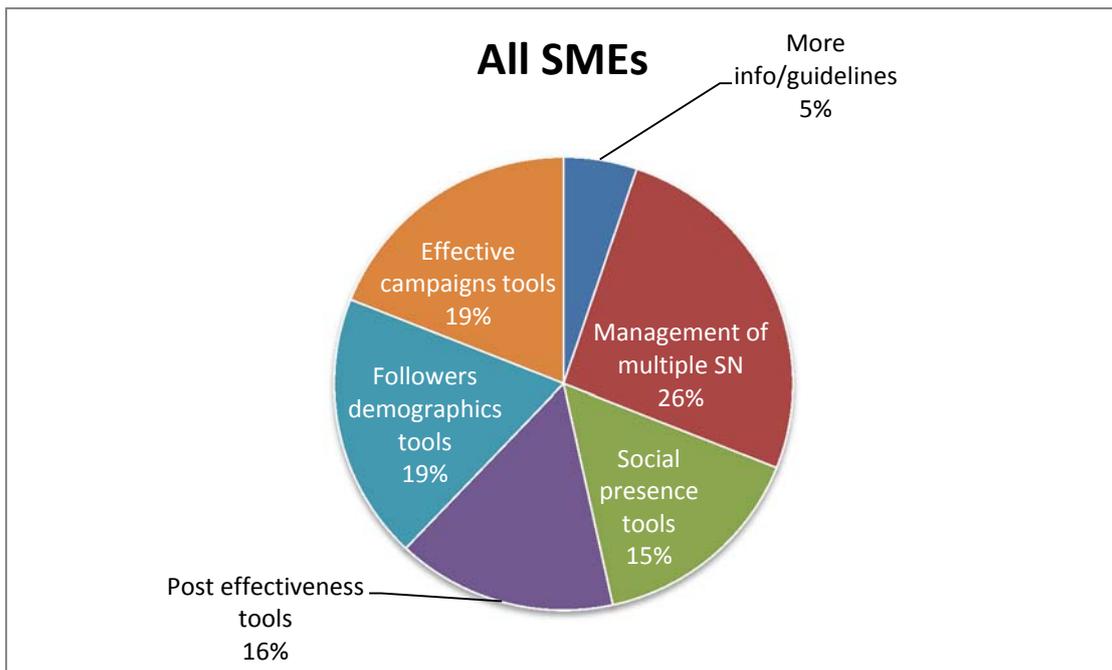


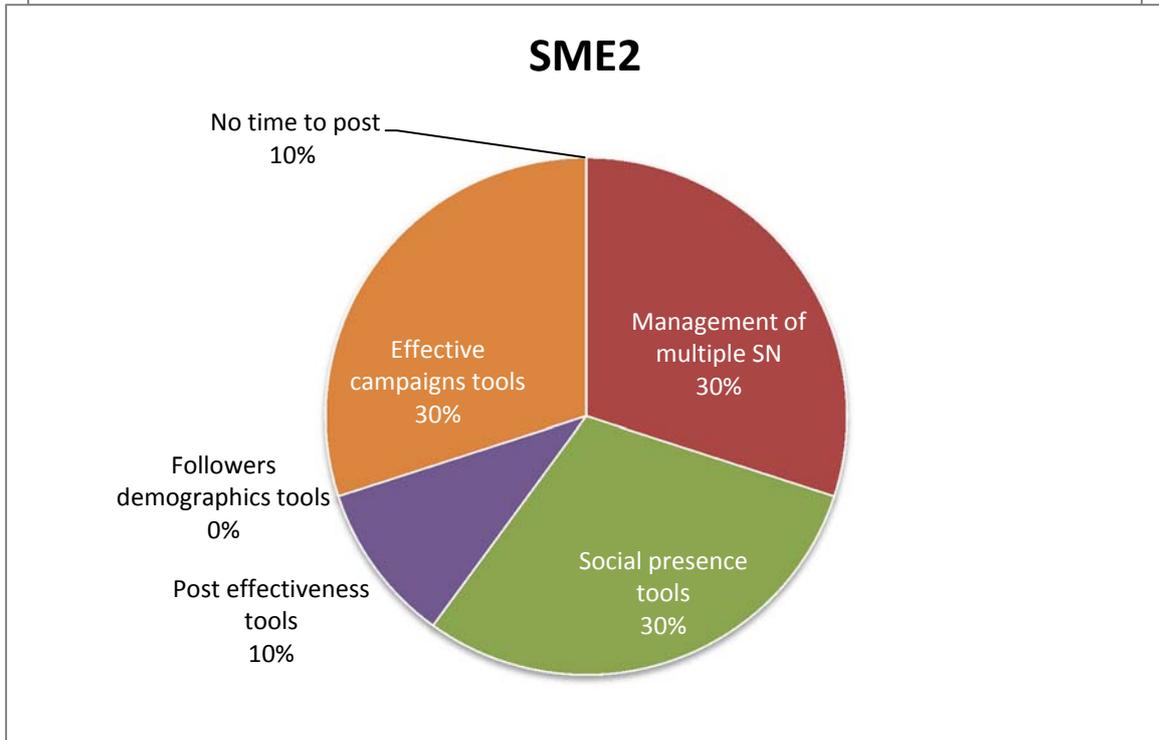
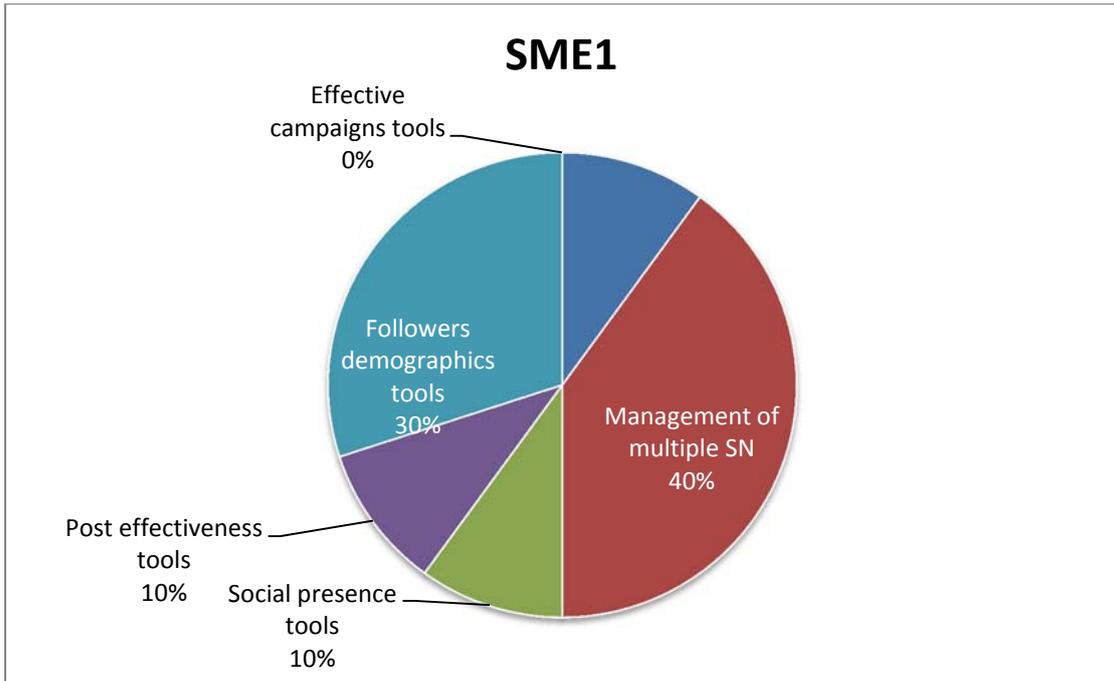
### SME2

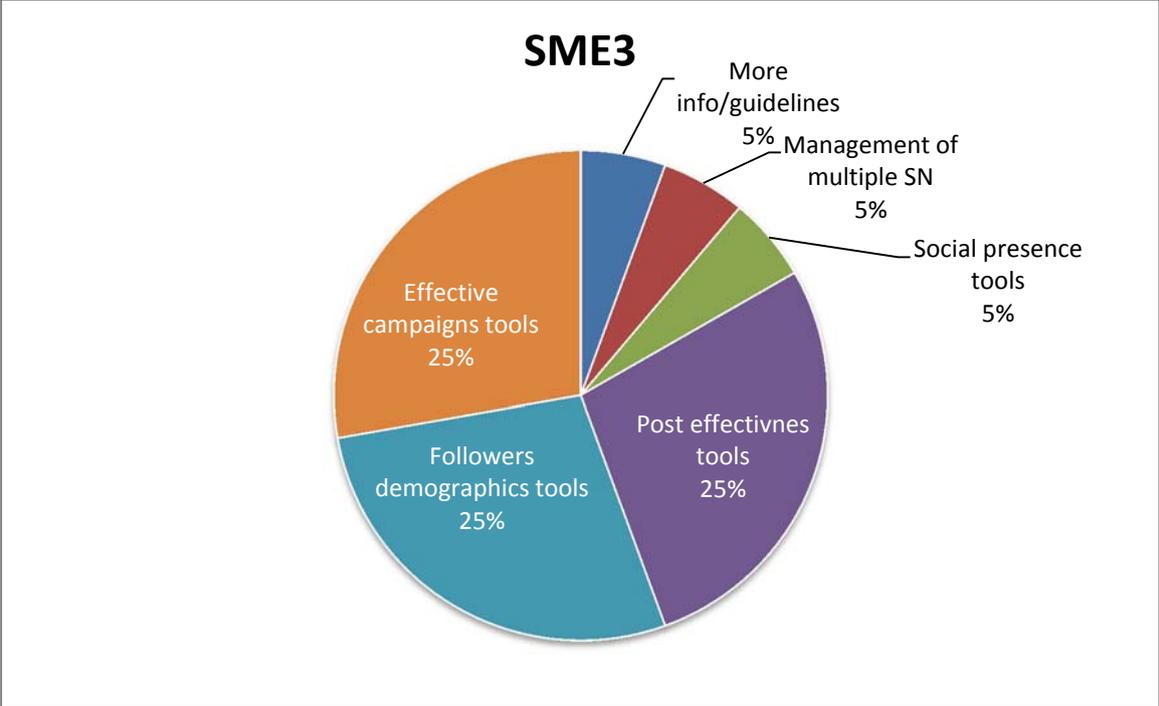




#### Needs for SN support







## 5. Conclusions

Results revealed that the usefulness of the SM tools as well as intention to adopt and integrate them in future activities varied considerably among the participating SMEs. This was a generally expected result since these companies differed considerably in terms of organizational structure and SM management needs. The main common effect that the introduction of the tools had on all SME's was a renewed interest for engagement with SM activities in general. All SMEs that participated in our study increased their SM presence to some extent either by engaging in new SM networks or by increasing their activity on those they were already using. The provided SM tools helped some SMEs to realize that they lacked an overall SM strategy with specific objectives and measurable goals. However, apart from the positive effect and intentions to integrate SM tools in their everyday activities, the SMEs confronted difficulties in aligning their business goals with continuous usage of such tools.

It seems that Return of Investment in social networks has not yet reached a satisfactory level for the SMEs that participated in our study. However, we expect this to change since SMEs, and in particular small companies, are in front of a new market and new potential customers. The SM tools can help SMEs to move towards to this market by reducing cost in terms of time invested and by allowing them to design, develop and monitor social market promotions.

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