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Improving B2B communication by utilizing digital marketing channels: a case study of RE- ALPAD

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**Improving B2B communication by utilizing digital
marketing channels: a case study of REALPAD**

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REALPAD is a fast developing company that offers CRM software for residential real estate developers. The company is planning to expand its sales to new parts of the world and therefore has a need for more effective communication channels for the company to reach more prospects in the international market.

The main objective of this thesis project was to find out how to improve REALPAD's communication with potential and existing customers by using various digital marketing channels. In order to achieve the goals, theories of different digital channels were examined along with research on the effectiveness of these channels to B2B businesses in order to come up with suggestions for the company.

The theoretical background concentrated on theories of B2B marketing communication and digital marketing as well as the digital channels which are search engine marketing, website and content marketing, social media, email marketing and affiliate marketing. These channels are relatively low cost and can help businesses to reach wider audiences compared to the traditional ones.

The empirical part of the thesis project employed different research methods for data collection. Firstly, a face-to-face interview with the CEO of REALPAD was organized in order to receive a deeper understanding about the company's perspectives and goals. After that, a comprehensive analysis of the problem using the CATWOE model was implemented to support the final decision-making. Questionnaires were also developed to gather information about the use of digital marketing channels among B2B customers. Additionally, a benchmarking of the case company's main competitors' digital marketing channels was conducted to examine the methods being used and what can be learnt from the competitors.

As an outcome of the research a set of recommendations was prepared for REALPAD on which methods are the most effective for the company communication and how to manage the channels in order to accomplish the best outcomes.

Keywords B2b communication, digital marketing channels, software, CATWOE analysis, content marketing, website

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	6
1.1	Introduction and the background of the thesis.....	6
1.2	Purpose of the thesis	6
1.3	Research problems.....	6
1.4	Research method.....	7
1.5	Knowledge base	7
1.6	Structure of the study.....	7
2	Theoretical background.....	8
2.1	B2B Marketing	9
2.2	Marketing communication	10
2.3	Digital marketing channels	11
2.3.1	Social Media Marketing	12
2.3.2	Email Marketing.....	17
2.3.3	Search Engine Marketing.....	19
2.3.4	Website Marketing.....	27
2.3.5	Content Marketing.....	29
2.3.6	Affiliate Marketing.....	39
2.4	Trends in B2B digital marketing	41
2.5	Analysing models.....	43
2.5.1	CATWOE analysis.....	44
2.5.2	Benchmarking	44
2.6	Summary of the theoretical background	45
3	Research approach	45
3.1	Market research	45
3.1.1	Quantitative method	47
3.1.2	Qualitative method.....	48
3.1.3	Data analysis	49
3.2	Market research methods in the study.....	51
3.2.1	Methodology.....	51
3.2.2	Validity and reliability	51
4	Empirical study.....	52
4.1	An overview of the case company REALPAD	52
4.1.1	Product.....	53
4.1.2	Customers.....	54
4.1.3	Market	54
4.1.4	Vision	54
4.1.5	Current marketing strategies	55
4.2	CATWOE analysis.....	55

4.2.1	Customers.....	56
4.2.2	Actors.....	57
4.2.3	Transformation process.....	57
4.2.4	World View.....	58
4.2.5	Owner	59
4.2.6	Environment constraints.....	60
4.3	Interview with CEO Marian Skvarek	61
4.4	Competitor analysis - Benchmarking	62
4.5	Results of survey on consumer behaviors	70
4.5.1	Customer and customer awareness analysis.....	70
4.5.2	SEO usage analysis.....	71
4.5.3	Website analysis	73
4.5.4	Social media usage analysis	75
4.5.5	Email marketing analysis	77
5	Suggestions based on the empirical study	79
5.1	Search engine marketing.....	79
5.2	Website and content marketing	80
5.3	Social media channels.....	81
5.4	Email marketing.....	82
5.5	Affiliate marketing.....	83
6	Conclusion and reflection on learning	84
	References	85
	Table.....	90
	Figures.....	91
	Appendixes.....	92

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and the background of the thesis

The idea of the thesis original came from the previous experience with REALPAD company, in which one of the authors had chance to learn about the company, its business ideas, current marketing situation and also worked on several marketing projects. REALPAD is a fast growing technology company based in Prague, Czech Republic, who is confident about their advanced technology and aims to expand their business to the global market. For the benefit of the company, the study is made to help REALPAD achieve their important objective, which is to improve their communication to their existing and potential customers.

1.2 Purpose of the thesis

The main purpose of the thesis is to study the company's current problem, which is lack of communication with the B2B prospects. Based on the understanding about the company's product, market and current situation, a suggestion on how REALPAD can improve its communication utilizing various digital marketing channels will be developed. The study will begin with the company analysis following up with research on which digital tools are more effective to B2B businesses, as well as a benchmarking analysis on the case company's main competitors to ultimately come up with a series of recommendations and reflection on learning.

1.3 Research problems

In order to achieve the objectives that was mentioned above, there are several questions that are necessary to be studied:

- What are the main customers and their usage on different digital marketing channels, which one they think that are useful?
- What are the trends in the B2B digital marketing recently, which tools will be useful and effective for REALPAD?
- How are the main competitors of the case company using their digital marketing channels, what can be learnt from them?

1.4 Research method

The thesis project will be conducted under a case study model, in which knowledge about the company was already attained and it only requires deeper understanding along with execution of various research methods. The development of the research will be carried out using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Concerning quantitative method, there will be one questionnaire concerning important questions for the project idea, which will be in English since the target recipients are from all over the world. In terms of qualitative method, an interview with CEO of the case company was organized in order to understand what the company's vision is and expectation from the project. Additionally, the research will also include a method of benchmarking, in which information about REALPAD's competitors using digital marketing channels will be gathered on the Internet. The expected outcome is to see if these channels are functioning well and together with the survey results the authors will create a set of ideas for case company.

1.5 Knowledge base

The first most important part of the thesis project is building up a knowledge base in which students will explain the basis of all the relevant practices used in the case study. When establish the fundamental background for the study, both literatures and electronics sources on the Internet were used. The main resource for book are found in Laurea Library, however due to the limitation of English sources availability it was decided that various e-books online written by experienced marketing teams and consultants will also be accessed. Additionally, in order to gain wider and more specific knowledge about relevant field, online articles, discussions, guidelines and instructions were gathered during the theory learning process. The keywords were used to search for these sources were: B2B marketing communication, digital marketing tools, social media marketing, content marketing, managing digital marketing channels. The knowledge obtained will form a foundation for the following empirical study in next chapter of the thesis.

1.6 Structure of the study

The structure of the study will follow six chapters which is shown in the above figure, consisting introduction of the thesis, theoretical background, research approach,

empirical study, suggestion for the case company and lastly conclusion. Basically the case study is about finding solution to the case company current problems therefore it starts with various marketing theories and literatures which will be the foundation for the project, and afterwards the authors will use different research approaches to have deeper insights about the company, its product and market, current marketing activities in which the results will be showed and analyzed in detailed. Last but not least, conclusion on findings and solutions will be presented based on the research outcomes along with studied theories. Students will also include reflection on their learning, what have been achieved and what could have been improved at the end of the thesis.

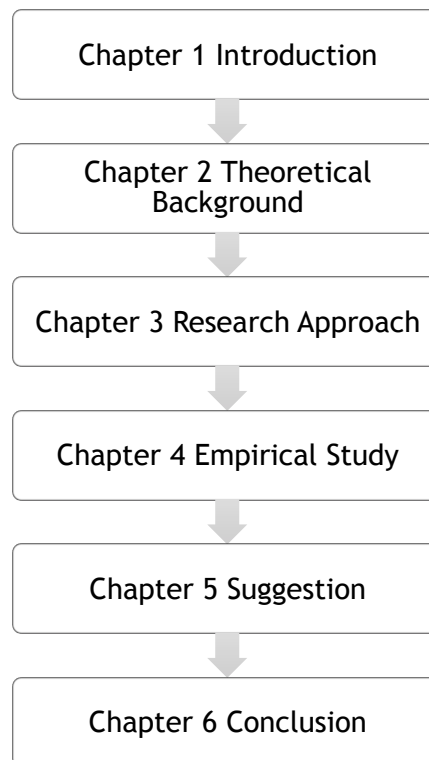


Figure 1 Structure of the thesis

2 Theoretical background

In this chapter, the theories supporting this study will be discussed in detail. The chapter will start with introduction of B2B marketing and its characteristics and how B2B differs from B2C marketing since this study will mainly focus on improving communication for B2B businesses. After that is various principles of marketing communication, types of communication mix and moreover definition of the main concept of

the theory, which is digital marketing and the benefits, it can bring to a firm. After founding a basis of general marketing theory, several digital marketing tools were examined in terms of characterization, their disadvantages and advantages as well as the tools know-how in order to provide a better awareness of different options can be used for marketing communication strategies. In addition to the theories, some key B2B digital marketing trends will also be discussed.

2.1 B2B Marketing

Business to business (B2B) marketing is the marketing of products and services that businesses and it happens when other organizations buy these products not for personal use but for other purposes such as manufacturing, reselling or general operation. Compared to B2B buyers, B2B ones are typically larger in size and they also made bigger purchase after careful consideration of various alternatives. The products or service purchases are generally complex and it requires know-how, instruction and training to use. In addition, demand is usually not affected by changing in price but true value of the product (Solomon, Marshall, Stuart, Mitchell & Barnes 2013, 193).

When it comes to B2B buying cycle, it is different from B2C cycle in such extent that decision on a purchase of a product is made by group of people at different positions instead of just one individual. These individuals are those who have interests or expertise related to the product services and the group is called “buying center”. In general, similar to regular consumer decision process, the B2B buyers need to go through similar steps of the process, which are problem recognition, information search, and evaluation of options, product and supplier selection and post evaluation. However, within each step, it is often more complicated therefore marketers need to pay more attention to every single details (Solomon et al. 2013).

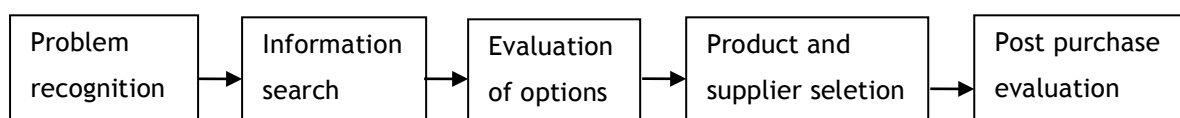


Figure 2 B2B Buying decision process

First of all, the process always starts when one notices a problem and decides that a purchase will help solve the problem. After that, buying center starts to prepare research from different sources such as consultants, magazines or journals to look for alternatives. At this stage, they frequently pay attention to the supplier's marketing communication channels, all of which is to identify the "product specifications and potential suppliers". The next step is examining all elements of the product concerning its quality, pricing, maintenance services, payment and policies. The more expensive and complicated the product is, the longer time it takes for buying center to choose the right choice. There are a number of issues need to be taken into account when it comes to selecting the product and supplier, which are the number of suppliers, agreement with suppliers, in house or outsourcing production and post purchase services. After the purchase was made, it is highly important to evaluate performance of the product since it directly affects the satisfaction of final customers (Solomon et al. 2013, 206)

2.2 Marketing communication

Marketing communications are a business's effort to deliver messages and media about their products and offers to consumers in either direct or indirect way. These messages can be information about the products and services, for which purpose, where and by whom they can be used; how a product was made; meaning of the brand and the connection of it to a variety of life aspects such as people, places as well as experiences and feelings. Marketing communication activities are designed to increase sales and brand awareness, in other words associate the business brand to consumers, motivate them to purchase the products, establish relationships and strengthen their loyalty to the brand (Kotler & Keller 2016, 580, 583). Exclusively in international market where there are factors of geographic and psychological distances involving between the firm and its customers as well as other intermediaries, it is extremely important to have effective communication (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 376).

In terms of marketing communication mix, there are 8 main modes of communication which are advertising; sales promotion; events and experiences; public relations and publicity; online and social media marketing; mobile marketing; direct and database marketing and lastly personal selling. Marketers can use not only one but various means of communications to notify, impress and persuade consumers, however it is

critical that the messages to be delivered are profound and consistent (Kotler & Keller 2016, 582, 584).

According to Kotler & Keller (2016, 587), in order to develop effective communications, one needs to follow eight steps. First step is to identify the target audience, who will receive the messages, whether if they are the current or potential customers, influencers, general public or specific social groups. After that, marketers will move on to set the communication objectives which can be establishing a product or service category, brand awareness, brand attitude or influence product purchase action. When the communication objectives are clearly set, it is very essential to develop the ideas of the message which should be meaningful and unique then decide how to express the message and which source can be used to deliver the message to the consumers. The next step is to select the communication channels to contain these messages, which can be personal channels (involving advocate, expert and social channels); non-personal channels (mass communication including advertising, sales promotions, events and public relations) or integration of both types. The following steps are establishing the budget for the marketing communications; selecting the marketing communication mix and measuring the effectiveness of the communication channels.

Last but not least, all businesses are striving for an efficient and effective integrated marketing communication in which they can reach the right customers with a strong and consistent message at right timing and using the right channels. In order to achieve this, marketers needs to consider thoroughly every steps taken, from the relevance of the message to each of the target audience, to which means of communication can earn better reaction from message receivers and the cost-effective of all channels being used (Kotler & Keller 2016).

2.3 Digital marketing channels

Digital marketing, also known as online marketing or Internet marketing, is a part of marketing communication mix. It involves close connection with online communications tools consisting of search engine marketing, social media marketing, email marketing, online advertising and online partnerships. More specifically, it utilizes different forms of online company presence and presences, which are company websites, social media channels and mobile applications. Digital marketing differs from

traditional marketing because of the use of internet-based channels, instead of traditional media such as print, TV and direct mails. However, in order to achieve success and build effective multi-channel marketing communications, it is still necessary to integrate both of the two marketing types (Chaffey 2012).

The main purpose of digital marketing is to support the objectives of attracting new customers and providing services to existing customers which will help enhance the customer relationship through electronic relationship management and marketing automation (Chaffey 2012). According to Miller (2012, 7), conducting a digital marketing strategy will also help increase the company's competitiveness in the market, building closer bond with customers and normally cost less than traditional marketing methods. It is critical to participate in the digital world since nowadays B2B buyers are starting to do online research for information before making their buying decisions. Miller (2012, 7) had proved it with the results of Forrester research that more than 50% of the professionals that make decision in businesses take part in social media networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as following blog posts and video channels. Moreover, some of these professionals even create contents for these media channels by themselves. In short, due to the fact that everyone is participating in this digital community, company needs to gain more visibility online in order to reach more prospective customers.

An effective digital marketing plan commonly consists of not one but several tools that are integrated altogether. In this study, we would like to discuss further and more in details different channels of digital marketing, which will be useful for B2B marketing communication, which are social media marketing, search engine marketing, affiliate marketing, content marketing and email marketing.

2.3.1 Social Media Marketing

Social media is the democratization of information, turning people from content readers into content publishers. It uses the "wisdom of crowds" to connect information in a collaborative manner. Social media can appear in various forms, such as weblogs, Internet forums, podcasts, wikis pictures and videos. Some of the most popular social media applications are Google (reference, social networking), Facebook (social networking), YouTube (video sharing, social networking), Wikipedia (reference) and Instagram (photo sharing, social networking) (Evans, 2008, 33).

There are some significant characteristics that differs social media from more familiar traditional media, such as newspapers, books, television, radio. First of all, social media allows the audience to participate in the platforms and become a part of the process of generating content. Secondly, social media is constantly changing; for example, people can edit stories on Wikipedia and expand the information on the site from time to time. Thirdly, social media involves various different social channels, especially online social channels that can become a good complement to traditional media (Evans 2008, 34).

According to the definition of Word Stream about Social media marketing (SMM), it is the process of using different social media outlets in order to achieve marketing communication and branding goals. Social media marketing includes most of the activities involving social sharing of content, videos, and images for marketing purposes, as well as paid social media advertising.

Advantages and disadvantages

There are several benefits that social media marketing can bring to a business, especially for start-up B2B companies. Some of the most significant benefits that can be easily seen are: firstly, it is a cost effective marketing method since most of social media advertising is relatively cheap and offers unlimited reach 24/7; secondly, raising awareness and brand recognition of customer as it makes the brand more visible and more accessible for new customers, at the same time familiar and recognizable for existing ones; thirdly, increasing conversion rate because social media represents social proof and has 100% higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing does (State of Inbound Marketing, 2012); other benefits are enhancing brand authority, improving search engine rankings, enriching customer experience and growing customer insights (DeMers, 2014).

However, together with its benefits, there are also some disadvantages that B2B companies can face when then use social media marketing. The first disadvantage is the competitive exposure especially for companies who are not strict with their employees using social media; valuable insights can easily be leaked out and used by the competitors to against the brand. Besides, companies sometimes can also fail to use social media effectively if they do not have good understanding of the potential and

thus opportunity cost is likely to rise. In addition, lacking of ownership of the accounts as well as policies, procedures or employee training can also become a major risk (Ed Marsh, 2014).

In the following part, some of the most popular social media that B2B companies are using will be listed down, which are Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.

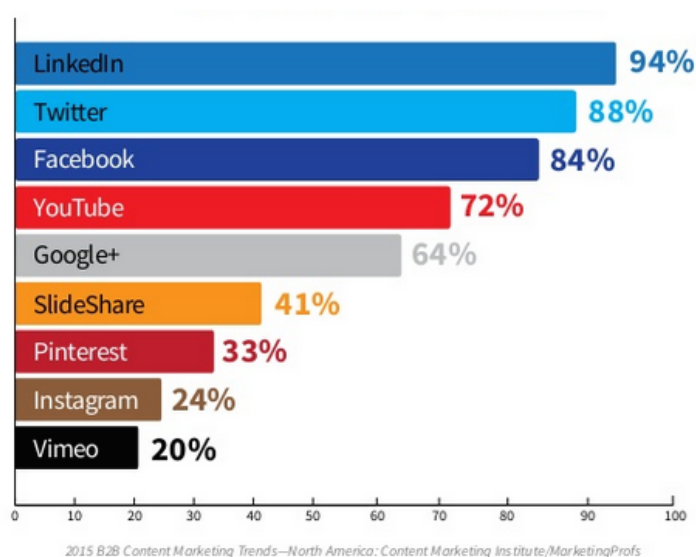


Figure 3 Usage of various social media channels in B2B marketing (The Content Marketing Institute 2015)

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional social media marketing site. LinkedIn offers a place for people to share their professional profile online and find people in the same or similar professions and industry. It is also a great tool for companies to find talents and influencers as well as establish relationships with key partners from all over the world. LinkedIn is recorded to be an extremely important social media in the B2B world. 43% of all marketers have found a customer via LinkedIn in 2013 (HubSpot State of Inbound 2013). 94% of B2B marketers use LinkedIn as part of their content strategy (Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends— North America report, 2016).

Twitter

This is another well-received social media that enables people to broadcast their updates across the web. B2B companies nowadays tend to use popular Twitter hashtags to gain more attraction and create group conversations with users who interested in the topics. Marketers can additionally follow these hashtags to find out news and changes in the market and customers (Gillin & Schwartzman 2011, 17). By having active interaction with the right audiences, company can increase their followers and also their brand awareness as a result. In fact, it is recorded in 2013 that 36% of all marketers found their customers via Twitter (HubSpot State of Inbound 2013). With all of these features, Twitter is a wonderful social media marketing tool that a lot of companies are using to communicate with their customers.

Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website which enables companies to create their own profiles, upload contents such as photo and video, send messages and keep in touch with people in their connection. Facebook also offers page admins to do paid advertising to targeted customers (Whatis.com 2014). Business-to-business (B2B) marketing on Facebook is no longer a strange thing. It is even getting more commonly used among businesses to become the most powerful social media platform because of the great numbers of users as well as the high conversion rate and the potential for paid placements (Hammett 2016). Through Facebook, B2B marketers are able to not only do advertising, but also recruiting and communicate with investors (Gillin & Schwartzman 2011, 106). In 2016, it is recorded as the most visited social media with 1,100,000,000 visitors (eBizMBA Rank, September 2016). In addition, 42% of marketers stated that Facebook is “critical or important” to their business. Besides, companies that acquired customers from Facebook included 77% of B2C and 43% of B2B companies (State of Inbound Marketing 2012). This growth means that Facebook is a very potential marketing place when it comes to online marketing.

YouTube

Another popular social media is YouTube with 1,000,000,000 visitors (eBizMBA Rank, September 2016). It has also become the second largest search engine, which is bigger than Bing, Yahoo, Ask and AOL combined. YouTube offers Internet users a space to share and watch quality videos on a regular basis. People can connect to each other by sending requests on YouTube as well as subscribe to their favorite channels and leave comments on contents. Nowadays, YouTube is a cost-effective marketing tool which helps companies gain better recognition and reach a great number cus-

tomers as well as many other benefits that B2B marketing efforts may offer (Johnson, Innovation enterprise, 2016). Besides, as the second largest search engine, YouTube can be a powerful tool for business-to-business marketers. It is recorded that 74% of B2B marketers use YouTube to distribute content (Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends— North America report, 2016).

Instagram

Instagram is now one of the most popular photo-sharing apps for smartphone users. It supports people to share photos and short videos as well as offers filters and simple photo-editing tools. Instagram has continuously been adding new features to their app such as: “save as draft” functionality, new icon and app design, support for multiple accounts, better comment moderation and so on (Gordon 2016). With all of these regular improvements, Instagram is becoming a winning social media. According to ClickZ article by Leighann Morris 2015, Instagram now has 400 million active users and most of instagrammers are shoppers. Iconosquare’s 2015 Instagram study shows that 70% of IG users have looked up a brand on the platform. Plus, 62% of users follow a brand of their favorites. Engagement with brands on Instagram is 10 times higher than Facebook, 54 times higher than Pinterest, and 84 times higher than Twitter (Forrester 2015).

When a business is able to make the best of social media marketing, they can engage and connect with their customers and even their customers’ network. According to Word Stream, some of the key points that a business should take into consideration when running social media marketing are:

- **Planning:** Companies have to make sure they have a good social media marketing plan, which has good keyword research and creative content ideas that will attract effectively the target customer.
- **Brand image:** When doing social media marketing, it is important to ensure that the company’s brand image is consistent throughout all the social media platforms because it is the identity of the business.
- **Content:** Contents on social media have to be valuable and inviting so that the target audience find it interesting enough to follow updates in the future. Be-

sides, varying contents by implementing infographics, photos, and videos along with classic text-based content is also necessary.

- **Track Competitors:** Companies should also keep track on the competitors' sites in order to gain more information on their social media marketing insight as well as valuable data for keyword research. There is always something that can be learned from competitors.
- **Analytics to measure success:** Tracking data is another important step that should be done carefully. Google Analytics, Facebook Insights, Twitter Insights are several social media marketing tools that helps companies measure how successful their social media marketing techniques are, as well as determine which strategies should be continued or discontinued.

2.3.2 Email Marketing

Email marketing is considered as one of the most cost-effective form of direct marketing for marketer to manage a large database of customer's information. It means one need to create an email form then send emails to the customers using one or two email marketing tools and wait for responses. Business can communicate to their customers personally and immediately without spending little cost. This method is ideal for B2B companies who want to encourage current customers' loyalty and reach more prospective customers (Miller 2012, 195).

According to Miller (2012, 190), B-to-B email marketing varies in different approaches, which are:

- **Regular mailings:** Company send out emails monthly or weekly with general information about company news, service updates, price lists as well as different offers.
- **Newsletter:** This is a special form of regular mailings, which can be a mix of company or industry news, new product features, changing of locations or human resources, any information that the company wants to communicate to its customers.

- Notification mailings: Notification emails are sent when customers need to make an action or changes while using the products, company can include some promotion message in these emails which will cause no harm.
- Related items mailings: This type of mailings often includes service plan for products that were purchased recently or buying suggestion to customers who recently looked at the company's products.
- Promotion blast: Emails that are sent to customer periodically to promote about products and services, which are on special events, discount or clearance.

Every email marketing campaign needs to follow 3 main steps, which are building contact database lists, designing the emails, sending and evaluation. First step is to build a detailed customer's' database. This step requires marketers to collect precise information about customers and afterward smartly classify them into different segments based on their behaviors and interests. Next step is designing relevant contents and making sure that the message is highly appropriate for its audience. When developing the content of the mails, it is important that the email marketers identify the objective of the mailings campaign. That can be for example to lead recipients to a specific action: click to link to see the detailed articles on the website, watch a video clip, click to a registration form, etc. Lastly, email marketers can choose an email marketing tool to send all the emails and keep track of the campaign's performance for evaluation (Tất tần tật về marketing 2013).

There are few key factors that will help improve response rate and create an effective email marketing communication the email marketers can consider when following the 3 steps above. First of all, the emails should be creative in terms of designs and content, which provide a meaningful value to the company's prospects (Kotler & Keller 2016). The second factor to be taken into consideration is the recipient segmentation and emails adjustment according to their groups' interests and behaviors. Thirdly, it is recommended to test the campaigns in small groups of recipients first to examine the deliverability and other elements of the emails such as content, image, and size of text. Last but not least, marketers need to keep in touch with prospects by utilizing follow ups emails in order to strengthen the relationship and receive more feedback and insights for the upcoming campaigns (Marketo n.d.).

According to Spear Marketing Research (Leone 2015), regarding the benefits email marketing can bring to a firm, it is essential to mention its low cost as well as possibility of testing and integration with other personalized direct media. Additionally, email marketing is a great tool when it comes to attracting current customers to revisit the company's website and at the same time shorten the campaigns deployment time compared to other traditional media. On the other hand, marketers can also face some difficulties while managing email marketing campaigns. It might be a challenge to deliver the emails to recipients successfully due to the differences in web mail systems, Internet service providers and email reading platforms. Another difficulty is how to keep the recipients engaged and responsive to the mails and it requires email marketers' good understanding of communication preferences as well as human and technology resources (Kotler & Keller 2016)

In conclusion, email marketing plays an important role in any B2B digital marketing plan and marketer can use this throughout the customer life cycle. In order to avoid being regarded as spam or trash, it is a critical matter that customers' database is managed well and the mailings should be valuable to each target group of the recipients (Miller 2012, 195).

2.3.3 Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) is part of online marketing, where businesses promote themselves through popular search engines, such as Google, YouTube, Bing, Yahoo or other regional search engines. In the digital era, before an act of purchase, people tend to search for about products or services on the internet, about their photo, price, selling location and reviews from previous buyers. Especially when it comes to B2B market, Miller (2012) found out that more than 60% of the B2B customers prefer using general search engine to find these information rather than any other source. As a result, SEM has become surprisingly important in any business's digital marketing plan. The idea of using SEM is to make a company's site appear as closer to the first page of relevant search results as possible, even better if it is at the first place. The higher you rank, the more likely searchers will visit the website (Miller 2012, 11).

There are two different components of search engine marketing, which are search engine optimization and paid search (pay-per-click) marketing. This chapter is to

study more about these components, its advantages and disadvantages as well as practices in planning and managing search engine marketing.

Search engine optimization

According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012, 491), search engine optimization (SEO) is a process of using different techniques and marketing strategies in order to increase ranking of a company website when it is shown in “natural or organic results listings” for a specific search query. The term organic results means that when the user types in a keyword or phrase on sites like Google, Bing or Yahoo!, a list of results will appear and the results showing below the sites with ads are organic search results. A site can only be on top of the list with excellent SEO skills and smart strategies but not by paying these search engines money. When doing SEO, one will be using various techniques to optimize the website, such as making changes on HTML, structure, layout and content of the website, which are any text, photo, video or other multimedia form that users can view or interact with; and building effective internal links and inbound links to the company website. If the website has relevant content and design to a topic that a user is looking for, Google will more likely to show it in the top search results (Miller 2012, 125).

Concerning generation of an organic results listings, every search engines will go through three stages: crawling, indexing and ranking or scoring. First the engines will use their software processes (usually called spiders or robots) to access to all types of documents, images, videos, news in the World Wide Web (www.) and find relevant links, examine the changes in the pages and store selected information in data centers for indexing which sites are most relevant to the searched terms. After that, the search engine will rank these sites in line with their popularity based on two main factors: the matching between key phrases in the content web page and the ones users type in the search box; and links from other sites or social media to the web page (Moz, Chaffey & Ellis Chadwick 2012, 494, 496).

Optimizing process

When it comes to the actual SEO process, Miller (2012) suggested various ways to optimize the site for higher rank for the search results:

- **Quality content:** It is critical to create authentic, useful and descriptive content that give answer to visitors' problems. The information in the site's content should be relevant to the topic, easy to read and has correct grammar. This optimization requires copywriting practices in order to create SEO friendly content.
- **Keywords:** To some extent, the factor that SEO concerns the most is keywords and phrases. SEO guy can use different keyword research tool to create a list of which keywords the target customers use and choose the most powerful ones to optimize the site with keyword-oriented writing methods.
- **HTML tags:** There are different types of tags to be focused on which are Title tags, Meta tags, Header tags and Anchor text. A title tag usually includes the most important keywords and phrases while Meta tags are a number of tags regarding data about the page. Lengths and structures of these tags must follow some specific rules and limit.
- **Website design and organization:** A good design will allow search engine's crawlers/ spiders to recognize the key content. Therefore, the most important information needs to be placed on top of the page as well as sections or headings. In order to notify crawlers which content is the leading or lower one, one need to put headings and subheadings for keywords and phrases. Since the spiders only look for text but not videos or flash, the sites should be made up with text instead of over-using images and videos. In case the website designer uses a lot of images and animations, make sure they include very informative text in the description title.
- **Links:** In B2B network, links optimization is about encouraging suppliers, distributors, customers, partners, other industry groups, blogs, and publications to link to the site. It is essential that the site have quality content so that other sites find it favorable and appropriate they will link to company's site and start mentioning the links on their site. Hence more visitors definitely will be interested and more sites will make the links. In addition, SEO person can also consider making links request, purchasing or engaging in link trading.

Advantages and disadvantages

Questions have been raised about how SEO benefits a company's marketing and there are a number of things that can be listed down. First of all, if the website is ranked in the fifth or eighth place in the search results list, especially on the first page, internet searchers are more likely to click to these organic results than the top advertisements. A company only needs to invest in good SEO practices to improve the ranking on the search results, instead of paying any fee to search engines, in order to increase a great amount of traffic to its site. In other words, this method is relatively low cost and usually has a higher conversion rate than other marketing methods if implemented successfully. Another advantage of SEO is that it can help attract the right prospects who are actively looking for the products or services that the company offers and have a greater intention to acquire (Chaffey & Ellis Chadwick 2012, 494).

However, on the other hand, this method requires complicated implementation, a lot of time and continuous investment. Marketers have to consider countless elements involving all content management; key words and performance analytics; web page copy, titles and images; external and internal links, which make SEO become one of the most difficult marketing methods in use nowadays. Hence it can take up to 6 months to indicate the results of the optimization process, especially for newly established websites. Even when the site already attracts a great number of visitors, SEO still needs to continue. It is called an ongoing investment because of the need for nonstop content creation and links generation on a regular basis, which is very crucial concerning keeping the website on top of the search results. Last but not least, since there are many factors to examine including the elements mentioned above and also competitors' performance, it is challenging to presume the ROI rate. It can only be calculated roughly later on during the process with performance tracking and analysis (Chaffey & Ellis Chadwick 2012, 495).

Paid search marketing

Paid search is a form of online advertising in which a company pays search engines to put their advertisements on the search results listings. It is also known as pay-per-click marketing (PPC) since its main idea stands for payment of the paid listings (Chaffey 2012, 500). Basically, PPC means that advertisers bid on a list of keywords that are relevant to their businesses, for the site links to be displayed on search en-

gines' sponsored links positions. Every time a user clicks the links, advertisers need to pay a small fee to the search engines (Word stream)

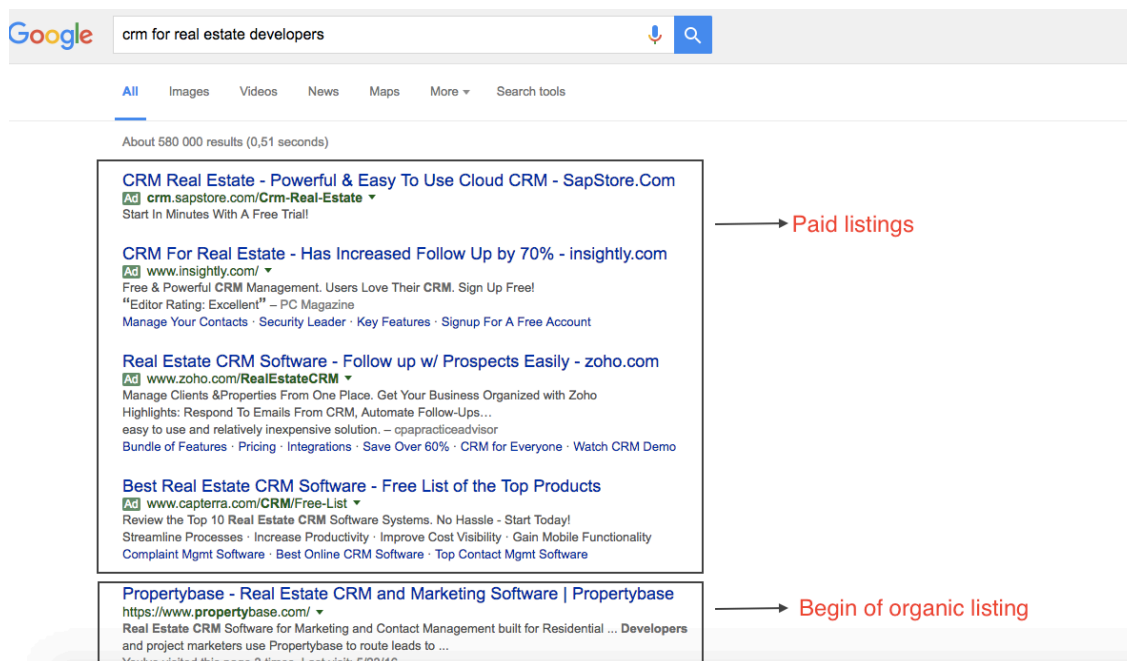


Figure 4 Example of text ads shown in paid listings

The ads can be in various formats, typically in a form of small text-based ad as shown in the example above or product listings. There are also other types of ads, for examples shopping ads can also come with more visualization, price lists and reviews which are usually used to attract consumer's attention and actively encourage them to make the purchase. Not only that these ads appear on sponsored links in results listings but they also show up in third party sites for examples social networks or on Google content network (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012).

Concerning paid search marketing, paying highest will not secure the top spot for the company. A page will be on top of the search results if it has the highest ad rank. As it can be seen in figure 5, the ad rank in Google AdWords is calculated by multiplying cost per click (CPC) bid and quality score of the ad. Cost per click bid and quality score are the two key factors that need to be managed thoroughly. CPC bid is the maximum fee company is willing to pay every time a link is clicked. Quality score is a valuation in which AdWords rank how relevant of the ad text and keywords as well as interaction between visitors and their landing page (Word stream).

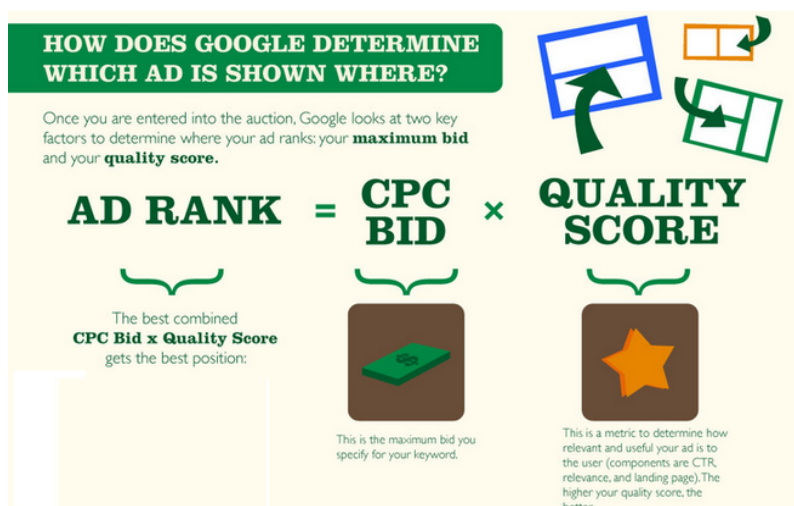


Figure 5 How Google determines the position of the ad (Word stream)

Google decides the Quality Score based on a number of factors, which are the click through rate, the relevance of the keywords and ad text to the searched terms; relevance of the landing website and its quality; and more over the previous performance of the advertisers' AdWords account. If the quality score is high, cost per click bid can be lowered down but the ad will still be ranked high (Word stream). In order to boost quality score and gain higher ad rank, businesses are in need of establishing effective campaigns on the ad network and constantly working on them.

Managing PPC

The first and extremely important element of the paid search advertising is keywords. This stage involves comprehensive keyword research and afterwards keyword classification. Advertisers should choose the most suitable and highly relevant keywords that connect directly to the prospects and then organize the keywords into ad groups under different ad campaigns (Word stream).

The second factor to be considered is bidding strategy. Advertisers need to define what they want to achieve as well as their budget allowance when choosing strategies for the campaigns. Companies with limited budget can choose the "lower cost strategy" where they bid on keywords and phrases that are less popular and with lower bid. In this case, advertisers need to focus their efforts more on improving quality score to raise the ad rank. On the other hand, if companies are willing to spend more budgets on the campaigns, the strategy will be bidding on popular key-

words with higher amount than the competitors (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick). Advertisers can choose to use automated bidding system on the network tools to maximize the clicks or do the CPC bidding manually by themselves, which means for different ad group and campaigns different bids will be set (Google AdWords).

Lastly, a critical part of a paid search advertising campaign is to create an effective ad copy. First of all, the title of ad should be descriptive and outstanding to make the prospective customers notice the ad at the very first glance. The following lines are websites links and 2 to 3 line of body copy and each line has a limited amount of characters. Therefore the ad text must be written shortly but wisely and focus on the benefits that the products and services offer. Additionally, in order to encourage the customers to click the links, message of the ad text is usually designed to give answers or suggest solutions to a particular problem (Miller 2012, 165). Furthermore, in Google AdWords, marketers can also improve the ad text better with the ad extension tool. This tool allows one to add more products functions, locations, reviews, calls or site links as well as call to action.

During the optimization process, it is essential that PPC marketers keep testing out the ad for CTR results and from that refining the ad text for higher effectiveness. In addition, continuous research and reporting of the negative keywords should also be conducted. This is to help exclude irrelevant search queries that may drive unnecessary traffic to the sites. Last but not least, since the main idea of this paid search marketing is to attract visitors the company's website, the landing pages need to be well-designed and connected to the ad groups (Word stream). Optimization of the landing pages will be discussed more in the following chapter.

Advantages and Disadvantages

More and more businesses are taking advantages of paid search marketing to reach the prospective customers who are actually searching for the products on search engines and have high intention on purchasing a product of service. This form of marketing is highly targeted because with the right use of keywords and match types together with negative keywords elimination, the ads only appear to relevant potential audiences. Google AdWords also allows marketers to do remarketing based on cookies of the users who were interested in the sites. In addition, it is believed to help gain brand awareness for the business even when the searchers do not click the link.

Companies can utilize PPC when planning to introduce their new products or large-scale projects (Smart insights).

In comparison with SEO, PPC advertising is simpler to establish and easier to predict ranking, traffic and conversion rate. If the campaigns are established and implemented smartly, the ad will show up on sponsored listings more quickly, only in hours or in days while SEO can take up to 6 months to show the results. PPC is also technically less complicated than SEO since marketers only need to adjust CPC bid and improve quality score concerning raising the ad rank (Smart insights).

However, one needs to admit that this method is relatively competitive and costly. Nowadays there are many businesses participating in the bidding competition. Therefore, as a result, the CPC of some popular keywords have risen significantly. PPC marketing is obviously not ideal for small companies with tight budget. Besides, it also requires the know-how of the whole system from PPC specialists on setting up, bidding management, reporting but also keeping track and making modification from time to time. Another disadvantage is that some searchers do not click to the sponsored listings because they find it not trustworthy (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2012, 502).

To conclude, when it comes to B2B marketing, it is more crucial to attract the right audiences than the total amount of attention. For both search marketing method, Miller (2012, 131) stated that companies needs fine tuning keywords tactics, which includes very smart selection of keywords in order to attract the right businesses and avoid traffic from non-business users. Picking the wrong keywords will lead to unnecessary requests or questions from not targeted customers. Therefore, keywords that are chosen need to be relevant, exclusive and meaningful to business searchers, those are actually interested in what the company offers but not general searchers,

It is can be clearly seen that SEM has a particular meaning in this digital marketing era. Internet users are searching for information daily and most of searchers only discover sites on the first result page. If a prospective customer is looking for your product and your site is unfortunately positioned on the second page, there will be less possibility of the customer visiting your website. Specifically for businesses that do virtual sales, achieving the high position on search listings is very critical. A smart

business is one who succeeds in associating SEO and PPC altogether for a better search engine marketing.

2.3.4 Website Marketing

Website marketing is the most important part of a digital marketing and B2B communication. A website acts like the face of a business and it represents a company's brand, activities, products and services; especially if the company doing virtual sales. In fact, all social media tools and search engine marketing that were studied above are communication tools that lead customers/ prospects to the website. Contents need to be created on the website before being shared on any other channels. Therefore, every marketer needs to utilize this marketing tool effectively.

Designing the website

When it comes to design the websites, a great B2B website need to have an organized structure with descriptive information and is also easy for customers to surf through the web pages. The website is constructed mainly with content, which means that the main objective of building a website is to provide current and potential customers with all information they want to know. The content includes first of all the presentation of a product or service along with its functions and how it benefits customers. In addition, marketers can include more information about instructions, manuals, customer success stories as well as company's contact details. The point is to create informative and useful set of contents so it is compelling to visitors who come to the website. Remember to keep the primary content noticeable and leave out all the unnecessary ones (Miller 2012, 107, 103).

Website designers need to take great responsibility on creating the website in a smart and simple format for the audiences to discover. It is recommended to build short pages in which visitors only need to scroll down one or two times since web users do not favor many scrolls in one page. Minimizing the clicks will help they find what they want easily and quickly. One should also use short sentences and paragraphs as well as headings and subheadings to make the sections more recognizable. It is also possible to design a quick search box for those who already know the specific information that they are searching for. Moreover, it is also important that marketers design the content in a way that will allow the search engine crawlers to find

and rank the keywords better (Miller 2012, 106, 114).

Another factor to be taken into consideration is the accessibility of the content. According to Miller (2012, 106), the decision making process in B2B companies often involves transferring documents from one position to another, and for this reason, they normally favor text format content or adobe pdf file. Marketers' mission is to figure out which form would be useful for customers and then prepare content pieces in several formats. Nowadays, websites do not only remain as company's content site, it is also act as a main source for other communication tools. Therefore it is essential to connect the website to the company's social medias, blogs and discussion forums. Commonly there will be Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ icons on the websites that lead visitors directly to these channels. And as B2B always has further questions, they might want to look for answers from somewhere or someone. The point is to get them in contact with salespeople or customer service easily. A great idea would be creating a button supporting the act contact/ email us, or online chat, which can be the start of the sales process.

Lastly, even though content is the most important factor, visual identity of the brand on the website also need to be designed thoroughly. The color and image has to harmonize together well with branding elements like everything was designed with the same purpose. It is important to bring customers an impression of a website that is consistent. In addition, website designers must be careful with the special effects and visualization because business users do not always have time to follow those animation and effects while some even found them annoying (Miller 2012, 105).

According to Miller (2012), company can provide various type of contents but there are some other core elements that a b2b website should consider which are:

- About us: An overview of the company, activities, and history.
- Products: Functions and benefits of the products or services company offers.
- Clients, investors or partnerships
- Pressroom: Company's blogs, white papers, product or services gallery, case studies, track record, achievement
- Privacy statement
- Contact info

Advantages and disadvantages

According to a survey conducted by Myles Anderson of BrightLocal.com, 66% of the respondents who took part in the survey agreed that a business gain more credibility with a good website (Brinker n.d.). More specifically, there are some significant advantages that developing a website can bring to a business. First of all it is effective and not expensive. Marketers can predict the expense they will spend on establishing and maintaining the website. And it is also obviously a cheaper way to introduce and advertise the business to the world. And by being visible online, the company can attract more visitors worldwide and consequently increase the sales. A website is considered as a very convenient communication tool that allow customers to access to company's profile and services anytime of the day 24/7 and from anywhere in the world with Internet. In fact, building a useful, informative and well-designed website will increase the credibility of your company by telling customers who you are, what you are successful at and why customers should trust you. In overall, website always a great tool to serve the company's customers, to keep in touch with them and engage prospective customers that visit the site (Dogulin Digital).

On the other hand, a bad-designed can be a disadvantage to the business by affecting its credibility in several ways. If a website has poor design and outdated plugs in; complicated and unclear navigation structure or the content is difficult to follow; the pages are loading very slow or not responsive; and there are too many promotions and advertisements, with any of these reasons, the visitors might leave the website and have a bad impression, instead of being converted into leads and later on customers according to the main objectives of building a website (Bashinsky 2015). An effective design requires professional skills and dedication to be achieved and definitely will decide if a visitor will make a transaction or turn into a lost customer (Collins & Co. 2014)

2.3.5 Content Marketing

According to the Content Marketing Institute, content marketing is defined as “a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action” (Steimle 2014). Nowadays, content marketing is the more preferable marketing tools for B2B enterprises than B2C enterprises.

When using content marketing, B2B marketers should be aware of some challenges.

- The first challenge is **producing engaging content**, which is able to attract attention of the audience and urge them to subscribe for more. An engaging content does not only need to be relevant, informative and entertaining but also be able to offer solutions to the audience's problem.
- Secondly, B2B marketers have to pay attention to **produce a variety of content**, which can be done by several way, such as: transforming the numbers from research reports into infographics, making narrative podcasts from clips of interviews, producing video tutorials for how-to posts, or creating infographics instead of putting ideas on motionless figures.
- Thirdly, **measuring content effectiveness** is another crucial part of content marketing that cannot be neglected. In order to achieve this, companies need to define which area they want to reach with their content, for example: brand awareness, lead generation, and customer loyalty. After that, tracking performance data for each content will be carried out to measure which content types, topics and delivery methods contribute the most to the company's content outcome.
- The fourth challenge for content marketers is to **produce content consistently on every channel**. It is critical to maintain a fixed and suitable schedule for publishing contents with editorial calendar as well as to create a repeatable workflow in order to save time and ensure visibility and accountability in the company.
- Another challenge is **measuring the ROI of content marketing program**, which requires a larger view of the whole program. Some of the most important data points that should focused on are: calls to action (CTA)'s click through rate, lead-to-customer percentage, cost per lead (CPL), average sales cycle lifetime, average revenue per user, and customer retention rate.
- Last but not least, **lack of budget** can be a major risk of content marketing in most of businesses, especially small businesses who do not have a sustainable

budget for content. However, larger enterprises also confront this challenge due to not utilizing their resources properly (Harris 2016).

Common Content Marketing Goals and Associated Metrics

GOALS	POSSIBLE METRICS
Brand awareness	Website traffic • Page views • Video views • Document views • Downloads • Social chatter • Referral links
Engagement	Blog comments • Likes, shares, tweets, +1s, pins • Forwards • Inbound links
Lead generation	Form completions and downloads • Email subscriptions • Blog subscriptions • Conversion rate
Sales	Online sales • Offline sales • Manual reporting and anecdotes
Customer retention/loyalty	Percentage of content consumed by existing customers • Retention/renewal rates
Upsell / cross-sell	Sales for new products / services

From Content Marketing Institute's The Complete Guide to Influencer Marketing Strategies, Templates & Tools

Table 1 Most common content marketing goals and associated metrics that may serve as practical KPIs (Content Marketing Institute)

There are several types of content marketing. However, in this project we will focus on some of the most common types that are being used in most of B2B companies, which are blogs, infographics and videos.

Blog marketing

Firstly, regarding blog marketing, it is about creating relevant and inviting blog posts about the company and its business, which will improve the image of the brand and enhance the reputation of the company. Regular blogging with updated information is mandatory when doing content marketing. Primarily, companies would have a blog separate from their websites, but finally nowadays, these two forms are integrated in the same place to make it less complicated for them to manage, as well as simpler for online visitors to approach. For example, many business owners choose to use blogging platforms, such as WordPress, for both their site and blog. Furthermore, as blogging has become so popular and strongly grown the last few years, many people have found their way to create businesses from their blog instead of having a business in the first place (Duermyer 2016).

Advantages and disadvantages

In one of the article on thebalance.com in 2016, Duermyer also discussed about a series of benefits that blogging can bring to a firm, which are:

- Cost saving when starting and maintaining. There are a lot of blog sites that are free of charge, for example: Wordpress.com and Blogger. Companies can have their own customized blog size by paying for only the domain and webhosting.
- Simple to use. It is not complicated to understand how a blog works and use it. In order to own a professional looking blog, content marketers only be familiar to the process of copying, pasting, typing, dragging & dropping, and uploading, etc.
- Powerful way to attract a frequent traffic to visit the site. By updating news, offers and interesting contents regularly, companies can give customers more reasons to come back on a regular basis.
- Enhancing search engine ranking. Many companies nowadays use blogging particularly for search engine optimization (SEO). As an example, Google is more likely to rank and show users results of relevant and up-to-date contents.
- Higher reputation and credibility in the market. Similar to having a good website, any company who owns a professional blog with valuable contents has higher chance to approach customers as well as partners in the market since they seem to be more reliable. Besides, unlike using social media, all of the content is owned by the company, which makes it better for the company image.
- Increasing effectiveness of other media. According to HubSpot, “The 2011 State of Inbound marketing”, companies who use blogs have twice as many Twitter followers as the ones who do use it.
- Increasing revenue from advertising and other services. Apart from promoting only the products and services of the brand, blog can also bring companies extra income from advertising and sponsors from other companies with affiliate products and services.

- Improving customer insight. Customers when visiting blogs can leave comments and feedbacks. This is a good way for companies to understand their customer more.

However, there are also some drawbacks of using blog marketing. First of all, blogging is often time-consuming because creating high-quality blog posts and updating the blog frequently needs great efforts from the bloggers. Therefore nowadays, companies tend to hire freelance writers and virtual assistant to help them with this process. Second disadvantage of this method is that it requires creativity and constant stream of ideas. This is considered as one of the biggest challenges for every blog writer: to come up with new idea for the next posts and keep customers inspired and motivated to revisit the blog. In addition, the results typically do not come right afterwards. Due to the overwhelming amount of information on the Internet, it takes more time for people to be familiar with one specific blog. As a result, the effectiveness of a blog cannot be estimated when the company first starts a blog. Moreover, blogs need to be promoted regularly. In order to gain more attentions to the blog, companies have to reach the targeted customers and encourage them to visit the blog site first (Duermyer 2016).

Infographics marketing

A well-designed infographic is a wonderful tool for marketer to communicate with the audience through words and imagery. The purpose of infographics is to simplify complex ideas and turn them into captivating message. Infographics marketing has become extremely popular for around three years now. While most companies use blogs as the main content marketing to achieve visibility, infographics is the combination of both powerful imagery and concise message that help audiences get access to wide range of topics. According to Wharton School of Business, it is stated that an infographic is 30 times more likely to be read than a text article. In order to explain the effectiveness of infographics, science has proved that 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual (Hyerle 2000), visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text (3M Corporation, 2001) and 67% of the audience was convinced by the verbal presentation that included visuals (Wharton School of Business).

Infographics diversifies into different types base on its purpose. Here are some of the most common types of infographics that marketers use nowadays:

- **Informational Infographic:** This type of infographic is mostly formed with long text and does not present a lot of graphs, charts and other visual details. The information and data are highlighted with appealing colors and supporting icons (Chibana 2015).
- **How-to infographic:** This type of infographic is designed to show the audience the steps or explain the process of creating something (Chibana 2015). For example, the infographic below explains how the website yBuy.com works.



Figure 6 An infographic show how a website works (Ruiz 2013)

- **Statistics infographic:** Focusing on showing statistics, this type of infographic provides a lot of charts, graphs and tables with numbers. The purpose of it is to deliver story to the audience with metrics. Statistics infographic is very commonly used in business reports, surveys, and other data driven contents. (Woo 2015)
- **Comparison infographic:** Infographic can also be used in order to make comparison between products, services, places or people. In this infographic, the audience can clearly see the differences, as well as similarities and features of each side. Below is an example of comparison infographics, which compares the male-female ratio between the major social media networking sites (Chibana 2015).

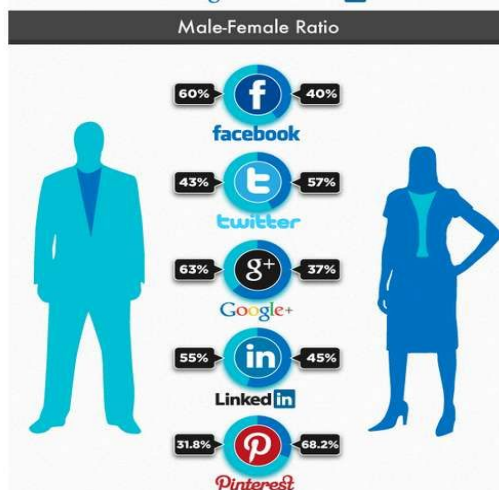


Figure 7 An example of a comparison infographic (Go Gulf 2012)

- **Timeline infographic:** This type of infographic is a tool that help marketers tell story or present the development and history of the brand or product over a chronological time period. Photos, symbols and other visual elements can also be used to support in this infographic (Chibana 2015).
- **Location/Map infographic:** Marketers usually use this infographics to display data trends based on location. It works most effectively when comparing statistics of a subject across different regions or even worldwide (Chibana 2015). The example below shows the percentage of how much women hold senior management position in business across 22 countries in the world. The infographic was provided by Grant Thornton in the International Business Report 2009.

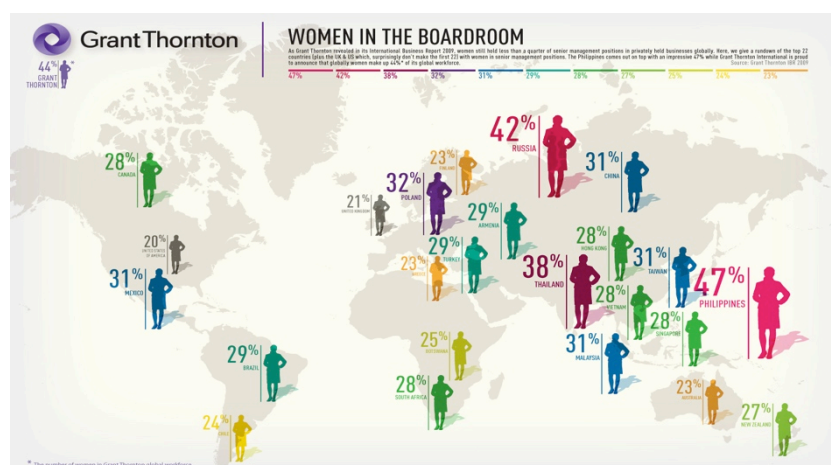


Figure 8 An example of location/map infographic (Thornton 2009)

- Hierarchical infographic: In this type of infographic, information is organized in different levels and how each level connects and differ to each other is also presented. Hierarchical infographic is usually designed in the form of pyramid chart or organizational chart (Chibana 2015).

Advantages and disadvantages

Infographics surely offers several benefits to B2B companies who choose it for their marketing strategy. First of all, infographics can transform boring-to-read statistics into a more captivating way, which are more likely to be shared as well as can help readers to visualize information and relationships, making the statistics come to life. This also helps businesses who use infographics as their marketing tool increase social engagement as their followers are more likely to share the infographic contents (Verticalresponse 2014-2015).

Secondly, infographics diversify a company's marketing channels, which allows the company easily approach a large number of customers on numerous channels. Moreover, marketers can be as creative as possible when creating infographics since they do not need to follow one template throughout; the marketers will have all creativity and freedom to design infographics in the way that they want (Kiryluik 2012).

However, companies also need to consider several disadvantages that they might face while using infographics marketing. The first disadvantage is that it takes time to prepare the design and layout of an infographic as well as requires design experience of marketers. Secondly, since search engine is not able to recognize images, infographics are harder to be found and indexed even though the webpage that contains the infographics can still be indexed. In addition, infographics are not designed to provide full details of on particular content. Therefore, if the designer tries to fit all the information into one infographic, it can be complicated for audiences to read and understand everything (Kiryluik 2012).

Video marketing

Ever since YouTube became the most popular video hosting platform, video marketing has strongly grown as a rising marketing trend. It is taking a key position in the

marketing plans of all major companies to increase their presence, keep in touch with their consumers, interact with them and turn them into paying customers. In the State of Inbound Report 2016 of HubSpot, it is stated that inbound marketers see YouTube and Facebook video as the future of marketing, stressing the power and importance of this marketing tool in business world (Jarboe 2016).

Nowadays, there are several kinds of content that marketers use for their video marketing plan. However, the most five commonly used types of video are: promotional video, interview video, product tutorial video, product presentation video and user generated content video (Eliasson 2016).

- **Promotional video:** This is usually the first video that any brand releases to introduce the product to their audience. Creating a good promotional video can strongly drive the conversion rate of the brand to the next level. According to Shagr - a professional online video maker company, there are nine crucial elements to create an effective promotional video, which are: making a personal bond with the audience from the beginning, keeping the movement in the video to make it more interesting for the viewers, arousing the curiosity of the audience, offering an irresistible solution to the problem that the brand is embracing, being able to speak up for the product and make it bold, adding more value to the product and highlight it to the customer, mastering the call to action, and finally closing the video with memorable tag line.
- **Interview video:** There are several types of interview video that a company may use to promote their brand. The video can be either a discussion with an industry expert about the future of the market, an interview with employees about how they produce the product, or an interview with fans to show how they feel about the product. The benefit of this method is that it helps the brand to create an emotional connection with the audience (Eliasson 2016).
- **Product tutorial video:** This type of video content is designed to give instructions and demonstrate how the product functions and benefits its users. According to Think with Google, in 2015 there were more than 100 million hours of how-to content had been watched in North America by the end of May (Eliasson 2016).

- **Product presentation video:** Brands use this type of video for their introduction of a new product as well as when they want to unveil a whole new line of product. A successful presentation video can bring massive effect on the sales of the brand. One of the most well-known companies that master presentation video is Apple (Eliasson 2016).
- **User generated content video:** Some brands can save a lot of work by creating campaigns and contests which encourage their fans to make creative videos of their products and share them on social media. However, since this video type mostly depends on the users it is crucial for the brand to also be active on entertaining their fans (Eliasson 2016).

Advantages and disadvantages

For many B2B marketers, video marketing is one of the most important steps in a content marketing campaign. Positive results are highly expected when videos are included in the marketing mix. Here are some of the biggest advantages of video marketing for B2B business: First of all, it creates emotional connection with customers, which can drive behavior. According to the Online Publishers Association, 80 percent of people can recall a video advertisement that they have seen in the past 30 days. In another finding from ComScore - an American global media measurement and analytics company, 64 percent of people are more likely to buy a product or service online after viewing a video about it. Secondly, video marketing can help companies to build a highly professional image. The third advantage that video marketing can offer is that it enables the brand to deliver strong SEO value if the videos are hosted on their own domain. Last but not least, video marketing is also an ideal vehicle for demonstrating product capabilities, especially to audiences who are not able to easily experience the product or service in person (Rebird 2014).

However, on the other hand, there are some disadvantages of using video marketing, such as: the cost of making a good video is certainly more expensive than traditional marketing or other email and print execution; it requires professional equipment, skillful staff and proper location to produce a high quality marketing video. It also takes more time to do video marketing since there are a lot of steps involved in the process. Moreover, technical problems can arise as videos require bandwidth to be viewed, and may not play properly on older devices (Rebird 2014).

B2B companies can certainly become better storytellers by making a good quality video. It will give the audience a good impression of the company as well as create a long-term value for the business. However, in B2B world, the purpose is to attract other businesses, which may not be in a comfortable enough position to click play during office hours. For more serious companies a video may even appear to be too trendy for a serious enterprise. In short, it is advisable for B2B companies to do enough research, define who their customer is, and then decide whether or not to sell warrants a video representation.

2.3.6 Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is a form of marketing which works based on the relationship between three parties: advertiser, website owners (known as affiliates or publishers) and consumer. Advertisers are companies who want to sell their products and ready to pay other people to promote their products. Publishers can be companies or individuals that own websites, blogs or social media networks that help advertisers promote their products and will earn a commission in exchange. Depending on the contract between these two parties, publishers will put ads on their website. The final party in this affiliate relationship is customers who see the ad online and make a decision to click on the link or submit their information, after that they will be led to advertiser's website. The conversion rate will be tracked at this stage of the process (Agrawal 2016).



Figure 9 How does affiliate marketing work? (vietdex.net 2015)

According to Impact Radius (2012), there are some mandatory requirements to achieve successful affiliate relationships for B2B business. First of all, it requires the willingness of the referring partner to agree the division as well as their part of compensation on a performance basis. Secondly, the publishers have to be able to effectively promote the advertiser's products or services to the target customer. Lastly, it is mandatory for a successful affiliate program to have an accurate, reliable and flexible tracking technology. For B2B companies, it is extremely important to meet all of these requirements if they choose an affiliate marketing program since this form of marketing is known to be more suitable for B2C companies.

Affiliate marketing shows some undeniable benefits that B2B companies can consider. The first benefit is that this form of digital marketing can reach various audiences by using different affiliates. According to Barry Saunders - B2B Manager and SEO specialist from Saunders & Co., it also does not take so much work because the publishers can use their own skill to bring customers to the brand and after that, the performance of an affiliate can be measured based on conversions and whether the companies (advertisers) are looking for more leads or actual sales in the end. Secondly, affiliates are believed to adapt to marketplace changes more easily. Moreover, affiliate marketing is considered very low-risk, because the advertisers do not have to pay if it doesn't work, which also helps companies control cost of acquisition as well as increase search in Search engine results pages (SERPs) since 80% of affiliates use SEO as one of a tools to promote the brand (Affiliate Summit Affstat Report 2012).

However, on the other hand, challenges are expected to arise and confront B2B companies when doing affiliate marketing. Recruiting the right media partner that meet the expectations and bringing them into the program is the very first difficulty. In B2B world, many B2B products require a longer and more complicated sales cycle than in B2C model. In addition, as most B2B companies want to keeping track of a B2B sale from lead generation through sale conversion in every affiliate program, they would need more flexibility and sophistication from tracking technology than most CPA or affiliate networks can offer. Furthermore, the process of tracking technology would involve several systems including the website of the company, CRM systems and even more. Last but not least, since publishers are mainly motivated by

money there is a risk that they can use unethical techniques to raise the revenue, which may directly destroy advertiser's reputation (Lisa 2012).

2.4 Trends in B2B digital marketing

In 2015, it was learnt in the "State of Pipeline" report by Bizible that about 40% of the B2B marketers use digital marketing for lead generation (Vermees 2016). However, the digital world is constantly changing regarding strategies and different platforms, therefore marketers need to consider the current trends when planning the strategy for the following year.

Among various digital marketing tools, this section will mainly discuss about content marketing trends due to the fact that content is the main source for most of the digital marketing channels above. Indeed, throughout the years, content marketing is still considered as the most critical part of B2B marketing. According to an article on CMS Connects, Tamturk (2016) found out in a recent survey that 60% of the audiences tend to get inspiration about a product after reading about its information. In addition, it was also mentioned that 70% of the survey's participant preferred discovering the product through blog or article more than from an advertisement.

In general, there will not be many changes on the types of content marketing however in the article "10 Digital Trends to Inspire Your 2017 B2B Content Marketing Strategy" on KO marketing blog, video is predicted to be the new trend in the next year. The author of the article, Young (2016) stated that many marketers have recognized the potential of video marketing in increasing brand awareness and customers' loyalty. It is believed to bring more positive ROI to businesses by making visitors engaged more to the contents due to its nature of interacting, in comparison to traditional long blog posts.

Additionally, the importance of social media on content promotion was also discussed. Due to the rapid development of various social media channels and an enormous number of social media users, social media has strengthen its position, made it to be the third most powerful method, along with website and emails which have always been considered the most effective channels to distribute content (Young 2016). The table below from Emarketer illustrates the usage and effectiveness of selected social media sites for content distribution according to B2B marketers in

Northern America. It can be clearly seen that LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter ranked at the top of the list which are being used widely; and among the three, LinkedIn and Twitter appeared to be more effective than the rest of the social media sites for B2B marketing (Allen 2016).

Usage vs. Effectiveness* of Select Social Media Sites/Apps for Distributing Content According to B2B Marketers in North America, Aug 2015

% of respondents

	Usage	Effectiveness*
LinkedIn	94%	66%
Twitter	87%	55%
Facebook	84%	30%
YouTube	74%	51%
Google+	62%	13%
SlideShare	37%	41%
Instagram	29%	22%
Pinterest	25%	20%
Vimeo	21%	-
iTunes	10%	-
Tumblr	9%	-
Vine	7%	-
Medium	6%	-
Periscope	6%	-
Snapchat	5%	-

Note: *responses of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 5=very effective and 1=not at all effective

Source: Content Marketing Institute (CMI) and Marketing Profs, "B2B Content Marketing: 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America" sponsored by Brightcove, Sep 30, 2015

197990

www.eMarketer.com

Table 2 Usage and effectiveness of social media sites for distributing content (Allen 2016)

Another promising trend in content marketing is user-generated content. This type of content can be produced by customers, influencers as well as outside experts. Although blogs written by a brand are already viewed as informative and reliable, when users create such content, it is immediately regarded as more authentic and convincing. Recently, many B2B marketers have been aware of the trend and started to join the competition. Companies establish B2B communities and forums for specialists and professionals to join and discuss about the trends with their peers. Moreover, new type of content marketing was born which is called "[influencer marketing](#)" (Tamurk 2016). Basically, the influencers are called "thought leaders", who are highly appreciated due to their knowledge and educative and valuable content creation, often about product reviews or discussion on new trends. Therefore, content that is written and distributed by influencers are likely to receive more trust and credibility. It is critical for the B2B marketers to identify the influencers and engage with them.

One can either provide great content with outstanding product for influencers to promote or hire them to produce content about the brand (Kinthart 2016).

Lastly, apart from content marketing, we would like to discuss briefly about the trend in marketing on mobile since it is also a part of digital marketing. The chart below has shown that more than 60% of B2B businesses used mobile sites and mobile apps in 2015 and this numbers are expected to rise even higher in the following years. As few years ago, when it comes to product research, desktops and laptops are mostly used for better quality and convenience, nowadays mobile is gradually become the main form replacing the old ones. As a result, a demand for mobile friendly site and content has been arisen in order to bring an effortless experience for users on all devices (Allen 2016).

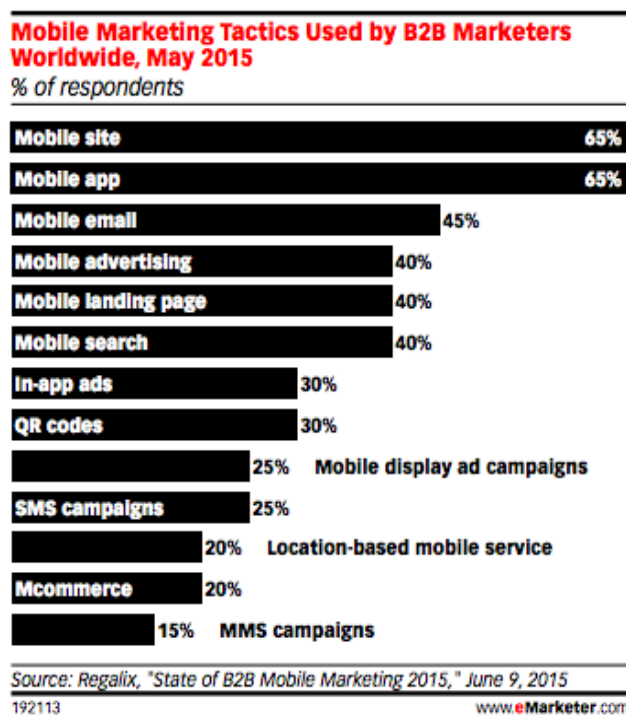


Figure 10 Chart showing mobile marketing tactics used by B2B marketers (Allen 2016)

2.5 Analysing models

Besides the discussion about different marketing concepts, it is also essential that one consider about study and analysis phase before developing any solutions or activities. This section will mention two method which are CATWOE analysis and benchmarking will help the company to collect crucial information and view the current

situation from different perspectives in terms of market situation and competitor analysis.

2.5.1 CATWOE analysis

According to the definition by Peter Checkland, a systems engineering professor, the CATWOE model is a part of the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). It is a business term that identified the people, processes, and environment that contribute to a situation, issue, or problem that needs to be analyzed. Nowadays, it is one of the generic techniques that business analysts use to define what the business aims to achieve, what the problem areas are and how the solution will affect the business and people involving in it is (Elmansy n.d.). CATWOE stands for six elements: Clients, Actors, Transformation process, Worldview, Owner and Environmental constraints.

2.5.2 Benchmarking

The Business Dictionary defined benchmarking as “a measurement of the quality of an organization's policies, products, programs, strategies, etc., and their comparison with standard measurements, or similar measurements of its peers”. The reason why benchmarking was chosen is because the method will help marketers to concentrate on the performances at the best level in a specific company, a competitor or even in a completely different industry. Moreover, based on the learning of these practices along with recognizing the needs of customers, a set of solutions can be created for the steady improvement of a company. This will indeed increase their competitive advantage as a result (Stroud n.d.).

According to Stroud, there are three most commonly used types of benchmarking, which are internal, competitive and strategic benchmarking and each serves a certain purpose:

- Internal benchmarking: this type of benchmarking focus on comparing a firm's business process to a similar process within an organization. To some extent it is easy to implement and not costly, and additionally made in order for one to acknowledge their own system more adequately. It is also considered as a great chance to experience the benchmarking measurement and help building the background for broader benchmarking researches (Types of marketing).

- **Competitive benchmarking:** this type is about comparing one company to its direct competitors in terms of products and services, process and several approaches. When doing competitive benchmarking, marketers will be able to gain more understanding about their own company as well as their competitors in various aspects. Exploring the competitors' strong and weak points and appraising their progress will assist a firm not only to establish a scheme of effective improvements from identification of customer anticipation (Koch n.d.).
- **Strategic benchmarking:** typically companies use this type of benchmarking when there is a need to expand the business to by concerning and evaluating the world top performance as well as customer satisfaction in different industries (Stroud n.d.).

2.6 Summary of the theoretical background

In this chapter, different characteristics of B2B marketing were discussed as well as the importance of marketing communication in increasing sales and brand awareness. Additionally, nowadays, digital marketing is playing a critical role in supporting the traditional ways of marketing in the whole effective communication plan. Within the theoretical frameworks, pros and cons of the digital marketing tools and their know-hows were reviewed which will support the recommendation on the channels later on in the suggestions chapter.

3 Research approach

This chapter will cover theories of market research, different methods in market research and explains the usage of the methods, which were used in the project.

3.1 Market research

According to Hagues and Morgan (2013, 24), market research is the systematic collection and analysis of intelligence in order to help inform business decisions and reduce business risks. Market research plays a crucial role in every business decision, especially in market assessment, voice-of-the-customer research, new product research

and communications and brand research. It is also considered as an important element in a lot of marketing paradigms. For example, in Igor Ansoff's products' and markets' matrix where there are four alternative marketing strategies, depending on whether the market or product is new or existing, market research plays a role in all of these four strategies (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 3, 4).

	Existing markets	New markets
Existing products	Market research is used to evaluate how satisfied the customer is with the product in order to sustain the growth as well as competitive advantages.	Market research will help companies find out new customer segments or new geographies.
New products	Market research can calculate the feasibility of launching new products.	Market research can find out new customer segments and geographies for new products or services.

Table 2 Igor Ansoff's products' and markets' matrix

In general, market research is utilized to serve these main purposes: to assess customer satisfaction and loyalty, to measure the effectiveness of promotions, to study the market size and shares of suppliers, to evaluate the use and attitudes to products, to determine optimum pricing strategies and brand influence, and to determine effective segmentation strategies (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 14).

There are seven steps in the market research process: brief, proposal, commission, qualitative research, quantitative research, analysis, and reporting. The first step of making a brief involves providing the background and the current situation as well as the objectives of the project, in short, what needs to be done. After that, the proposal will cover the use of qualitative and quantitative methods, specifying who will take part in these researches, and also plan the needed resources and timescale of the project. The following step is the fieldwork or desk research, which involves interviewing and questionnaire. The responses for these research methods then will be collected and analyzed by specialized software. The final stage is reporting the results and also involves giving appropriate recommendations (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 10, 11).

While quantitative research focuses on measurement of the market including market size, purchase behavior, awareness of the company, the size of the market segments, and so on which is concerned with a number of interviews, qualitative research focuses more on diagnostic understanding rather than measurement and determines a specific view about the company (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 9). For the qualitative research, we choose to use depth interviewing and observation and for quantitative research we take advantage of online questionnaire since they are the most suitable methods that can be applied in REALPAD's case.

3.1.1 Quantitative method

According to Cohen (1980), quantitative research is a social research that includes empirical methods and empirical statements, which are presented, in numerical form. The purpose of quantitative research is to describe variables, to test relationship between these variables and verify the cause-and-effect of the relation between variables (Burns & Grove 2005, 23). In other words, this research method is designed to quantify the problem by creating numerical data, which can be transformed into practical statistics. The most common methods of quantitative data collection is known as survey or questionnaires, which can vary in different forms: online surveys, traditional surveys, mobile surveys, website interceptors, online polls, and so on (Wyse 2011).

Questionnaire is known as one of the most effective collecting data method in market research. It is designed to understand the behavior and attitudes of the group of customers to a specific product or service. Highly structured questionnaires are often used in large surveys while unstructured topic guides are more likely to be used in depth interviews and focus groups research (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 132). Depending on the purpose, questionnaires can be divided into three different types: behavioral questions, attitudinal questions, and classification questions. Behavioral questions are made to understand what the customers do, which is very necessary for segmenting customer groups. Attitudinal questions, on the other hand, studies the opinion and belief of customers on the product or service. Lastly, classification questions helps researcher have more information about the respondents' backgrounds such as their age, gender, location, professional and so on (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 109-120).

There are several advantages of using this market research form. First of all, it allows one to make contact and deliver the survey to a great number of companies without significant cost. Secondly, within only one questionnaire, many issues and questions of concern can be addressed in an efficient way with the high potential of response rate. Another advantage of online questionnaire, especially when using Google Forms as the platform to design the questionnaire, is that it simplifies the analyzing process since the final data are automatically performed in form of charts and graphs with clear numbers and percentages. However, online questionnaire also shows some disadvantages. First, it is hard to ensure a good response rate due to the lack of motivation of respondents. Secondly, a questionnaire has to be clear with easy-to-understand questions and follows a logical order to avoid misleading (University of Bristol 2013).

It is also important to define a clear objective in order to make sure all of the key points are included in the survey. Other essential factors that need taking into account when making a questionnaire are: the introduction and screener, the way the questionnaire will be conducted (online or face-to-face), the formatting of the questionnaire, the respondents (the questionnaire should be concise and easy to follow), the order of the questions, the types of questions and how the data will be analyzed (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 132, 133).

3.1.2 Qualitative method

Qualitative research is a broad term for a set of various methods and approaches that serve the study of social life. The information and data collected in this research is nonquantitative and includes textual materials such as field notes, documents, interview transcripts and other visual records that report people's experience about a specific subject. The purpose of qualitative research is to provide new insights into the problem and helps to gain understanding about individuals or social complexity, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of a program or a method (Johnny Saldana 2011, 3-4). Qualitative research is also used to discover trends in thoughts and opinions, and investigate more thoroughly into the problem. The most common methods of qualitative data collection are unstructured and semi-structured method, which include focus groups, individual interviews, and observations (Wyse 2011).

For this case study, besides collecting information through observation, one author also had a depth interview with the CEO in the form of face-to-face meeting. A depth interview requires formality, clear structure, and purpose with a list of questions that are made to be asked and answered. In principle, an interview is a conversation, which is usually carried out face to face with the involvement of body language that enhances the understanding to the questions. However, depth interviews can also be performed through telephone with less loss of information and it is also a more cost-saving method (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 69, 80).

The advantage of this form of interviewing is that deeper understanding is achieved by better explanations of the respondent. Besides, it also helps interviewer avoid misunderstanding, mishearing as well as maintain interest during the interview. In addition, legitimacy is another positive point of face-to-face interview as the respondent would take the interview more seriously and concern less about confidentiality than talking through telephone. Last but not least, face-to-face interview also offers greater accuracy in the answers of the respondent since interviewer can judge them through body language and non-body language clues. The respondent is likely to give more considered answers to the questions (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 149). However, there are some disadvantages that go along when doing a face-to-face interview. It is more challenging to arrange this form of interview because it depends a lot on the conscientiousness of the interviewer. Furthermore, as mentioned above, face to face interviews most of the time are more expensive than interviews by phone due to all the possible costs of travelling, location, additional supervision expenses and so on (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 148-150).

Depth interviewing is highly useful in market research design because it can bring out more value for the research since the respondent's personal perspectives are investigated and shown sufficiently. Depth interviews are chosen when the research issues are unknown; issues, attitudes and motivations need to be inspected; processes requires specific description; avoiding negative effect of other people's view; complex understanding and explanation is indispensable (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 71).

3.1.3 Data analysis

After the qualitative and quantitative research, data analysis is the next important step of market research where data is organized, reviewed, verified, and interpret-

ed. The purpose of this process is to discover useful information and from there suggest conclusions, and finally approach decision-making stage (Boundless, 2016).

In qualitative research where the data is more complex and profound with open-ended questions, the researcher who has carried out the fieldwork is required to be entirely involved in the analysis, interpretation, and presentation to avoid the risk of losing data. This means qualitative researchers have to be thoroughly read the transcript as well as make notes on the key points. Verbatim quotations from respondents will be used in the report afterwards. There are also some few software tools that help researchers to analyze and sort out the qualitative data by calculating the frequency of different mentioned words in the interview. However, due to the wide range of words and word strings that respondents can use the application of these analyzing tools is limited (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 193).

In quantitative research, cross-analysis is mostly used when a great number of data are collected from the survey and questionnaire. These data will be entered into computers and analyzed by proprietary software, which allows one question to be analyzed in relation to another. Another type of analysis is multivariate analysis, which is usually used in statistical forecast. The main objectives are to identify the segments and show how consumers assess the importance of different factors when they choose a product or service. Relationships between data can also be demonstrated through this analysis. Depending on the segmentation, multivariate techniques can be divided into two smaller types: factor analysis and cluster analysis. While factor analysis concentrates on the attitude attributes and reduces the number of component factors, cluster analysis focuses more on the respondents, who are categorized by the basis of their attitudes to the product or service. In general, data analysis is a form of statistical model building that help explain how markets work, as well as predict the effectiveness of certain marketing actions (Hagues & Morgan 2013, 191, 192, 195).

In the research for REALPAD, as students created the questionnaire with Google Forms, it helps to see the statistics instantly after all the data are collected. Responses are documented into a spreadsheet, which makes it easier for the analyzing process afterwards. Moreover, Google Forms also offers a summary of responses where data are automatically inserted into charts with detailed numbers, which is

very effective to draw insights and enable students to have an overall picture of the situation.

3.2 Market research methods in the study

In the specific case of the project with REALPAD, both qualitative research and quantitative research were used in the form of interview and online survey, in order to achieve good understanding and in-depth knowledge about the company as well as to define clearly the problem facing REALPAD.

3.2.1 Methodology

For quantitative research, a questionnaire contained 16 questions were designed by the authors concerning usage of digital channels in B2B customers of the case company. The survey was distributed online, sent by sales manager of REALPAD to all of their clients. It was sent to 20 real estate developers from 1st November to 12th November 2016 and 18 responded. The collected data of the survey was analyzed in Google survey platform and Excel.

Besides, an interview the CEO of the case company, Marian Skvarek was also arranged in Czech Republic in October. Main objective of the interview is to learn more about the current problem from his perspectives, the overall picture that REALPAD are in, the expected outcomes of the project, the challenges the company will face during implementation and most importantly, the view of the CEO on which digital channels are potentially effective to the communication plan.

3.2.2 Validity and reliability

In market research, validity and reliability are the two important factors that affect the effectiveness of the research. Reliability is a term, which determines whether the assessment tool generates consistent and stable results after repeated examinations and tests (Robson 2010). In other words, the results are required to be consistent when researchers use the same research method under the same condition (Shuttleworth 2008).

Together with reliability, validity is the other fundamental concept in quantitative research. This term reflects the credibility and accuracy of the research result as well as determines whether the research covers all the issues that it was supposed to cover (Robson 2010). There are two types of validity: internal validity and external validity. External validity concerns the process of generalization of the research result and verifies if the result can be extended from a small group to an entire population (Aronson, Wilson, Fehr, and Akert 2007). On the other hand, internal validity concerns more in details about the research result and its accuracy (Wikipedia 2016).

Concerning the reliability and validity of the thesis project, the authors under the supervision of university's lecturer had designed the survey. Due to the small number of company's clients, the survey reached only 18 respondents, which account for 80% of the recipients. Since the results were analyzed regarding the frequencies of the answers and the recipients are greatly targeted and specific which are direct customers of the case company, it is expected to bring valid and reliable results to the research. However, a more accurate and generic point of view could be provided if the questionnaires were distributed to a larger number of recipients.

4 Empirical study

4.1 An overview of the case company REALPAD

First of all, REALPAD is the owned technology from EASYCORE Company, which based in Czech Republic. EASYCORE has two different business segments, which are developing customized applications for clients and managing their own technology company, REALPAD. The company has more than 20 exceptional colleagues including CEO Marian Skvarek, as known as co-founder of REALPAD, sales department and developers team (EASYCORE website).

Concerning REALPAD, it was founded in 2012 in Prague, Czech Republic. In the same year, REALPAD team become the winner of HTC start up competition hold in Czech Republic and also second runner up of IDCEE, which stands for Internet Technologies and Innovation in Central and Eastern Europe, hold in Kiev, Ukraine. After 4 years, the company has now becoming a dynamic company who desire to be the lead in software technology for real estate developers (realpad.eu).

4.1.1 Product

Initially, REALPAD was designed with an idea of developing a mobile application for real estate sales agents to help them store all information about their projects and clients in one place with instant access at anytime and anywhere and hence save time and improve sales performance.

Along with the development of technology and rising demand for an advanced CRM system for real estate developers, REALPAD is now a software offering residential real estate developers a simpler way to sell homes faster, build closer customer relationships and provide better decision making for projects in the future. The cloud-based solution provides four modules everything from business planning, inventory and contact database management to automating the sales process with quality assurance and other property operations functions such as marketing, analytics and reporting. There have been 7,500 residential units sold, 20,000+ deals closed and 100,000+ contacts managed in REALPAD.

REALPAD is designed to benefit various departments of the real estate developers, from sales agents and sales management, marketing to CEO, CFO and shareholders. For sales department, it is a cloud-based smart storage for all data involving in the sales process, such as units, their status, floor plans, location, photo galleries, price lists, mortgage calculator as well as deals and agreements with customers, their portfolios, payments and deadlines. In addition, to ensure sales team does not miss any important information, the software will automatically updates all data immediately after any changes made and always keep track of pending tasks. Database will be stored in the system and users can access to the information through REALPAD mobile, which is an application for tablets available on both Apple and Google Store. The cloud-based CRM system will not only replace all annoying and complicated paperwork to save up to 10% of sales agents' time but also help sales manager to manage and evaluate sales and marketing data easier and more efficiently.

For CEO and top management, REALPAD will help with business planning and evaluation of budgeting and cash flow predictions along with overview of all sales and administration activities in the company. The system also generates automated reports with statistical analysis and email alerts on the most important events in the company.

For apartments and houses buyers, REALPAD offers them an error free, attractive and professional experience.

4.1.2 Customers

REALPAD has served customers in 10 countries and helped improve the sales efficiency of more than 170 residential projects. Customers are mainly real estate developers, while few of them only use REALPAD mobile; most clients utilize the whole customized systems. At the moment, REALPAD targeted customers are medium and large residential real estate developers, or condominiums developers who build and sell houses, apartments, buildings. The CRM software will mainly support the sales department of the developers as when they start to sell properties, they need a secure and smart storage for all information but also easy to use and customize.

4.1.3 Market

REALPAD is currently the leader in software for residential real estate in Central and Eastern Europe. Since the company is based in Prague, Czech Republic therefore the company's main market at the moment are Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine and Russia. Starting from 2016, company has been trusted by more customers from Asia (Philippines and Thailand), and United States and now wants to expand their sales to new parts of the world.

In the global market, their main competitors are Bmby, Spark, Yardi, Propertybase, Nestio, and VTS; who offers relatively similar software technology and have gained a stable position in the market. Most of these competitors are based in America and have been trusted by large real estate developers all over the world, both in residential and commercial sectors.

4.1.4 Vision

REALPAD desires to bring value to all real estate developers around the world by simplifying the selling of new condominiums so that the entire sales process is a pleasurable experience. The company's ambition is to grow up to 1,000 customers

globally and at the same time attract more investment and thus will be able to invest more in technology, innovations and human resources.

4.1.5 Current marketing strategies

Conducting an international marketing strategy, REALPAD is using various marketing communication strategies, which are personal selling, sales promotion, online and social media marketing. Personal selling is done by the CEO and 2 sales managers of REALPAD, they attend different real estate fairs, conferences and tradeshows in order to seek for potential clients, which are residential real estate developers; or partners, who offered related real estate technologies; as well as incubators and investors who would be willing to accelerate and invest in the business. During these events, the managers will gather contacts and afterwards try to schedule sales meetings and sales presentations.

In addition to the attempt to communicate from the sales team, REALPAD also has started with using various social media channels, which are Facebook and Twitter. On these two channels, there are mostly updates about the company's clients' projects and some news about the company. Posts are not updated on a basis but only when there are changes in team and office or when the company acquires new customers. Since May, REALPAD has also started to establish a systematic paid search pay-per-click campaigns using Google AdWords. Recently, during the research project, REALPAD has launched a brand new website with redesigned logo.

In conclusion, the marketing methods the case company is using are relatively traditional. However, due to the fact that there has been at least two leads from the website converted to current clients, the need for improving communication through online marketing is still essential.

4.2 CATWOE analysis

With the information that were collected through observation and interview with the CEO of the case company, the authors have developed a deeper analysis about the current situation, which will help identify the implementation process to solve the problem, the risks and challenges will occur as well as impact the process will have on the environment and people involving.

In this project, we will investigate all of these elements of the case company - REALPAD in order to understand the long run objective of the company as well as to explore the problems and solutions for the company.

C.A.T.W.O.E		Designorate designorate.com
C	Customers	Who are the beneficiaries of the business process and how does the issue affect them?
A	Actors	Who is involved in the situation?
T	Transformation	What is the transformation that lies at the heart of the system?
W	World View	What is the big picture and what are the wider impacts of the issue?
O	Owner	Who owns the process or situation being investigated and what role will they play in the solution?
E	Environmental constraints	What are the constraints that will impact the solution and its success?

Table 3 CATWOE Analysis (Elmansy)

4.2.1 Customers

First of all, regarding the “customers” factor, companies have to decide who is receiving the products and service at the end because the changes in the system can cause either a benefit or harm to them. Besides, what kind of problems they are trying to solve now and how they will react to the solutions are also need to be examined (Pandey 2011)

In this case study, the receiving end is REALPAD existing customers which are residential real estate developers and also other prospects such as potential customers, partners, and potential investors. The problem recognized is that there is a lack of communication between the company and these customers. Besides, in a certain degree the software are not visible to potential customers even though it can bring great value to these developers. The communication at the moment is mainly happening personally only through the two sales managers and the CEO. Whenever there is any problem or questions, customers need to contact these sales managers because there is not sufficient information on REALPAD online channels.

It is believed that if the communication channels are redesigned and improved, the prospective and current customers will react positively towards the changes since they will receive more information and more updates from the company. As a result, they will have better understanding about company products, services and activities by which will help the company will get closer to the customers, create a close-knit relationship between two sides and motivates consumers to purchase the products. This can be considered as a win win situation for both the company and its prospects.

4.2.2 Actors

The second element to be considered is the actors. They are those who will execute the implementation of the solution or anyone taking part in the project directly and indirectly (Elmansy n.d.). In order to choose the right person for the projects, one need to learn about the employees and the team to see which one will be suitable for which area. Besides it is also important to predict which impacts the solution will have on them and how will they react to the solution (PESTEL Analysis).

In this project, REALPAD aims to improve their communication channels therefore the key people who will involve are marketing executives, CEO and sales manager. In addition, the company can also hire consultants who can guide the marketing person to achieve the goal or freelancers who will be responsible for copywriting, proofreading, social media and search engine marketing. However the core actors are still the REALPAD people, not to mention the developers team. As a matter of fact, the developers are the ones who know most about the software since they built the software and are working on it daily. From their deep understanding about the software and its process, they can create several blogs about benefits of the software, its manual instruction and updates on any improvements made.

When conducting the communication projects, the marketers will receives great supports and resources from the company. Thus they will have opportunities to grow and gain more experiences in the field.

4.2.3 Transformation process

When making a decision on some changes or improvements, one needs to be aware that the changes will always affect some parts of the system or other areas of the business (PESTEL Analysis). Questions to be asked are what the transformation process is, what are the outputs and inputs of the process and what the steps are between. The CATWOE analysis requires marketers to define the inputs and how inputs and resources turn into the outputs (Pandey 2011).

For REALPAD case, the main objective of the project is to improve communication between company and its customer through different channels of digital marketing, therefore the main process is to deliver messages and media to current and prospective customers using digital channels. The inputs needed for this process are information about the company's activities, products and services, manuals and instructions, offers and sales promotions, important events, customers' success stories. The information should come from no other place but within the company, which are all the departments from administration, sales, marketing and developers. Additionally, in order to turn inputs into outputs, one needs to utilize several different digital marketing tools to set up and manage the channels, for examples, setting up the blog pages, redesigning the websites, establish email marketing campaigns. Regarding the outcomes of the process, there will be more contents created such as blogs, infographics, videos as well as updates on the social media and official website, and emails and letters are sent to customers on a regular basis.

4.2.4 World View

The "World view" factor, as known as *Weltanschauung*, is about the overall picture of the situation. In CATWOE analysis, this is one of the most important elements because one needs to identify the real problem from that the company is working on and if they come up with solutions what is the broader impact, what the negative and positive sides of the impact. Investigating this element will allow the company to have a deeper understanding of the system (Elmansy n.d.).

Concerning the bigger picture of the situation, at the moment REALPAD is trying to expand their sales in a highly competitive industry where their competitors are also doing virtual sales globally. In general, real estate technology is fairly new to the market and still at its emerging stage. However it can be clearly seen that in most of the real estate conferences and online discussions this year, real estate tech has be-

come a trendy topic and many developers have realized the need for smart technologies, which can help them, improve their sales and management. Therefore, any tech company that can seize this opportunity to increase their exposure to potential customers will have more chance of winning the game. Under such circumstances, it is extremely important for REALPAD to raise the brand awareness and earn a specific position in the international market.

The real problem the company is working on is that REALPAD has gained attention from many developers in Czech Republic, Slovakia and can be considered as the market leader in Central and Eastern European area. Nevertheless, on worldwide market, compared to other market players, REALPAD still remains as a new and small business that has not gained significant recognition due to the fact that on the online market, the company is not quite visible to their potential clients. In fact, there are many residential real estate developers all over the world probably actively searching for advanced CRM software for their sales administration. Hence it is believed that improving their marketing communication through using digital channels can raise brand awareness and credibility of the company, help them reach their prospective customers but also encourage the loyalty of their existing clients, as it was discussed in the “customers” factor.

All the solutions are aimed to a wider outcome, which is generating the leads and increasing sales, expanding the business to more parts of the world, gaining more customers with the words of mouth power and being able to compete with other strong players in the market. Last but not least, the more powerful the company is the more innovations it can make and continuously contribute to the real estate industry.

4.2.5 Owner

The element "Owner" represents the person who has the full authority to make decision on the start and ending of the projects as well as the implementation of changes. This particular person has control over the whole system, and will be responsible for leading the problem solving process (Elmansy n.d.). Finding out who is the real owner of the process and taking advantage of the support they can provide will be a great help in the decision making step (PESTEL analysis).

The real owner of the communication process is the CEO of REALPAD, which is Marian Svkarek. Marian is the one who gives authority to any single changes within the organization and decision maker in publishing of information or spending resources in all activities. Marian also has recognized the importance of improving REALPAD's communication therefore he will support the project with ideas, feedbacks, and also financially as long as the project can show the positive results and get more leads to the sales team. It is also possible for the marketing person to test the effective of different channels in several ways under Marian's approval with a small budget given. In short, the owner of the process, which is the CEO of the company, is willing to support the implementation of the communication project.

4.2.6 Environment constraints

The last element to be considered is the environmental constraints. They are the limitations and restrictions coming from outside of the system, which may affect the results of the project. According to Elmansy (2015), these factors can be "ethical limits, regulations, financial constraints, resource limitations, limitations of project scope, limits set by terms of reference and others". Marketers' mission is to find out how to overcome these challenges to gain success for the projects. In another concern, it is also necessary to understand the effects the solution will have on the external environment (PESTEL analysis).

First of all, REALPAD's target market does not limit only inside Czech Republic but also to other countries and continents in the world, therefore the company might face the difficulties when dealing with different cultures, languages and local regulations. It is also a challenge that REALPAD is not only competing with other international technology provider but also with the domestic competitors in the countries. In terms of ethical limits, there should not be serious problem because REALPAD is very considerate of ethical issues and real estate developers often share the relatively similarities in setting norms and codes of conduct. However, there might be a lack of human resources since the company has not had a separate marketing team that is skillful and experienced in communicating through digital channels. Besides that, marketing budget can possibly be one of the limitations since the company is still small and not being able to afford costly marketing method.

In order to rise above these constraints, it requires deep researches on the market and the competitors along with cross cultural management. These researches will provide useful information for customer's segmentation and from that marketers can establish more effective campaigns for different segments. In addition, it is critical to utilize different cost effective marketing tools in order to save budget but still can achieve the expected results.

4.3 Interview with CEO Marian Skvarek

Despite the fact that student have had good understanding of the company during working period, it was still necessary to interview as it will be a great supplementary to the overview of the case study and a great source for the following analysis.

During the interview, Marian strongly emphasized on the fact that there has been more than two current customers contacted REALPAD through their websites since the beginning of the year; he recognized the potential in increasing the visibility of the company in the digital world. However, until now there has not been many efforts were put on developing these digital channels which also means that the company could possibly lose a number of prospective customers. They are the targeted prospects that actually interested in the product but could not reach to the company. When were asked about his opinion on the company's current marketing strategies, Marian admitted that the sales team is doing very well with the traditional method of personal selling, attending trades show and conferences. However, due to the fact that the company wants to expand sales to different countries or even continents, entering the digital community is undeniable critical.

The CEO also mentioned the need of using pay per click tools in Google due to the fact that international customers who tend to do research online will be able to find REALPAD with relevant keywords. Additionally, he realized the importance of networking on social media especially to reach the influencers who are capable of producing high quality contents and referencing to other members of their network. Lastly as a B2B entrepreneur, he has received a great number of emails and newsletter from different companies and partners and found them quite valuable and effective at keeping him engaged to their content. Therefore, Marian believed that email marketing should also be considered as one of the channels.

Marian also stated that he is willing to provide support on the utilization of various digital channels and added that REALPAD is a small company therefore there is plenty of space for testing and experiencing for improvements. The CEO is highly interested in the project and willing to provide resources to implement the plan concerning both financially and consultancy advice. However, in return, he set the goals of project is to attract minimum 10 leads to the website every month. In terms of budgeting, Marian did not give an exact number however he is flexible with less than 500 euros per month at the moment.

4.4 Competitor analysis - Benchmarking

In order to examine the best practices being used by the main competitors in the real estate technology industry, benchmarking was chosen as the main method.

In this case study, the benchmarking research will focus on competitive benchmarking to examine the digital marketing channels that REALPAD and its two main competitors are using. Under the circumstances that not all channels can be discovered through observation, the measurement will be carried on based on a number of criteria, which are their service offerings; the design and structure of their websites; contents on their websites as well as other forms of content marketing; and last but not least their social media channels.

The benchmarking process began with identifying the main competitors of REALPAD, which are VTS and Propertybase. The first competitor is Property base, a company whose headquarter is located in Munich, Germany. Propertybase offers relatively similar technology to REALPAD, which is an online CRM and marketing software for both residential and commercial developers. The software allows sales team to control deals and clients contacts, transaction and payments, daily workflow automation, data analysis and email marketing. The second competitor will be examined in the benchmarking is VTS, which based in New York, USA. Different from REALPAD and Propertybase, VTS's main target customers are commercial real estate landlords and brokerage firms. It is a platform designed to serve the purpose of leasing, assets and portfolio management as well as analytical reporting and marketing support. Both VTS and Propertybase offers their solution as computer software and accessible on mobile devices.

These two companies, according to CEO of REALPAD- Marian Skvarek, are identified as the strong players in the real estate software solutions market. In fact, recently, VTS has become the first real estate technology company that received 84\$ million funds from investors and the fund is still increasing (Athwal 2016). The company has offices in 8 offices globally and is believed to help clients to manage more than 3 billion square feet of commercial real estate worldwide. Propertybase, on the other hand, has served customers in 57 countries all over the world and managed about 50 million listings (Propertybase). It is clearly seen that the two companies have gain a stable reputation and are receiving trusts from many developers from all over the world.

Website design and structure

First of all, in term of website design and structure, the competitor's and REALPAD websites all have modern design, with clear navigation and consistent colors with the brand image and logo. From what it can be seen from their websites, there are a certain level of credibility the companies have gained by telling visitors stories about their satisfied clients and why they have chosen the products.

While VTS and REALPAD offers only English language at the moment, Propertybase's website is translated into 6 different languages, including English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Chinese. It can be explained by recognizing the importance of reaching the real estate developers from different countries in Europe apart from the international developers. In comparison with the case company website, the two websites from competitors obviously are more informative and have slightly more complicated structure. To evaluate the website structure, there are few things to notice such as: FrontPage, navigation system, allocation of contents and design of the website.

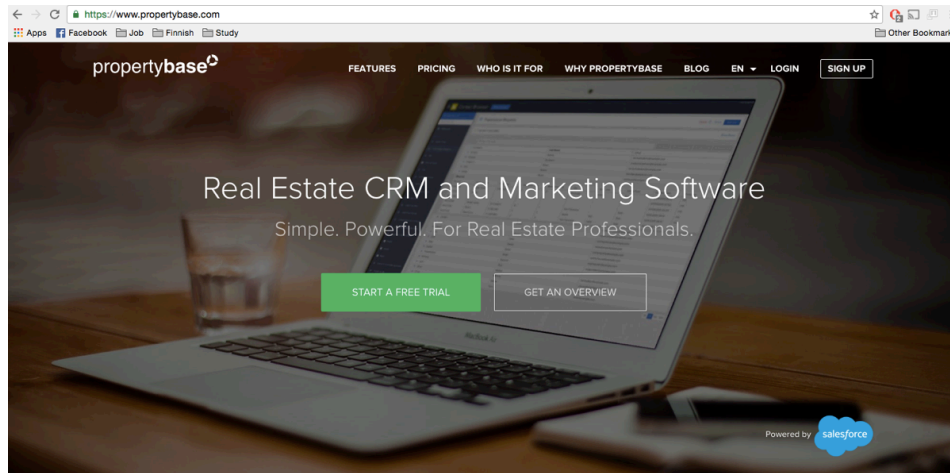


Figure 11 Propertybase website

When one visit Propertybase website, on the front page appeared the very first and noticeable headline with statement about the software solution following up with a free trial button and overview of the product. Information about main features of the software was divided into different table and presented with screenshots of the software in order to make it easier for visitors to understand the product better. After scrolling down the front page, there is one section that shows references from real estate journals, influencers and satisfied clients, which helps to increase the company credibility and trustworthiness. This section navigates visitors to a separate web page where more references, feedback and ratings on the software can be found. Besides, realizing the importance of blog in b2b marketing, the website designer specifically intend to lead visitors to company's own blog site by placing "Blog" on the navigation bar of the website. Last but not least, there is one outstanding point about the website is that a clear price plan was provided, on which REALPAD and VTS websites do not have.

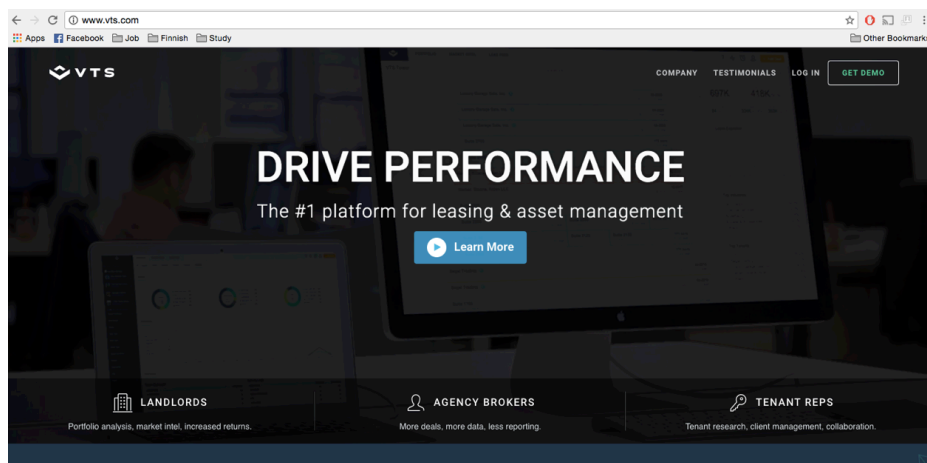


Figure 12 VTS website

In terms of VTS website, the site was designed in a modern yet simple way which creates a professional impression to those who came to the website. One point that makes this website distinct from Propertybase and REALPAD website is that the company wants visitors to explore what are their clients' opinions on the benefits of the solution at the very first sight of the front page. The video takes only one minute to view and it includes 3-4 top managers of real estate development companies talking about why they have chosen VTS as their asset management platform. This indeed will create a positive first impression about the product as well as increase the credibility of the company; hence it will encourage visitors to discover more about the product. Scrolling down, one can find more of the videos of clients talking about how beneficial the platform is to their businesses more specifically. In overall, important information about the product can be found within 3 scrolls, which is an ideal number of scrolls to visitors.

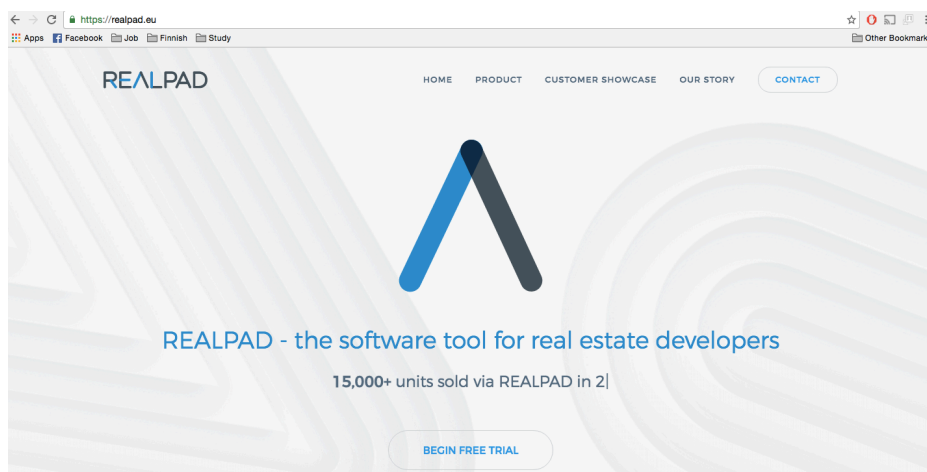


Figure 13 REALPAD Website

In general, the three websites are all user-friendly and visitors can easily find what they are looking for. In order to create the professional look and suitable to the real estate technology industry, their designs follow the minimalism style with usage of mostly basic colors, without over using many gifs, effects and placements of ads. Compared to the two competitor's website, REALPAD's website is also well-designed and provides sufficient amount of information to potential customers. Therefore, in terms of website design and structure, currently there are not necessary for any big improvement.

Contents

Considering this criteria, not only the contents on the website but also contents on the company's blog will be examined. As it was discussed in the theoretical background, simple, interesting and relevant are the keys to successful contents on one's website. In general, the three websites have meet the expectation of a website that can provide a descriptive introduction of their products. It can also be seen that the two competitors have invested great resources in making videos of clients talking about the experience using their technology solution. While Property base has a page for "who is it for", VTS also has "testimonials", both are to provide potential customers with more information about their remarkable clients and how they have been success in improving the sales process of these companies. VTS only showed videos of people sharing their opinion and experiences and Propertybase presented the testimonials as case studies along with pictures and text explaining briefly about the process, which was found more ideal for people who prefer to trim the text than watching the videos. With similar type of contents, REALPAD has only provided two customer showcases on the website with text and pictures. In the long run, it is necessary to create more case studies so visitors can view the value of the software from more perspectives. Additionally, the content of the studies might become more interesting if REALPAD can invest in making some videos interviewing their clients about the user experience.

Another very critical part of content marketing is the company's blog since blog is the main source for content sharing on social media and email marketing. Both VTS and Propertybase have quite appealing blog and articles are updated regularly almost every week. Company team, or freelance writer in the industry can write these arti-

cles, and some articles were also published in other journal site besides the company's blog. Contents of the articles are mostly about product updates and guides, new features in the system, new trends in the market and significant changes in the industry, company news and activities as well as any articles that discuss about the companies. VTS additionally has a separate blog for technical matters where the developer team share and discuss about different technology related topic. These blog are believed to increase the credibility and reputation of the company in the market due to the fact that they are provide valuable information to readers. Furthermore, it is also a great tool to communication with clients and gains more customers insights because customers can leave comment and feedback to the articles.

At the moment, REALPAD does not have their blog on the website but visitors will be navigated to their blog in Medium, a site where people write and share their blogs and interact with other writers. There has been only 5 articles in the blog therefore the contents are also not diverse. Blogging is a crucial part of the communication plan that REALPAD definitely have to take into account.

	VTS (www.vts.com)	Propertybase (www.propertybase.com)	REALPAD (www.realpad.eu)
Service offerings	Leasing and asset management platform for commercial real estate landlords and brokers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset and portfolio management • Market intelligence • Marketing support • Customer reporting 	CRM and marketing software for residential and commercial developers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email marketing • Workflow automation, • Client management • Transaction management, • Analysis and reporting 	CRM software for residential real estate developers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial management • Customer relationship management • Inventory management • Analytics and reporting
Official website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only in English • Modern design, professional look and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers 7 different languages • Clear navigation and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only in English • Simple and easy to navigate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear navigation Lively front page with gifs and videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> smart design with use of different colors Price plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly designed with new logo, consistent colors
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product description for each group of customers. Testimonials section: videos of customer talking about the platform Company news, industry news Separate blog and tech blog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product description divided to functions Case studies with customers' stories and interviews, customers stories Company blog: industry news, company news, case studies, references from influencers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Product description according to functions. Customer showcase: only 2 companies at the moment Team members and their stories,
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn Twitter: 3700 tweets, 1800 followers, actively tweeting Facebook: 488 likes Instagram: 654 followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn: well-structured information Twitter: 1926 followers, 2674 tweets updated daily Facebook: 2000 likes, updating posts daily, use Facebook ads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LinkedIn: EASYCORE media Twitter: 260 tweets and 250 followers Facebook: 173 likes No Instagram and YouTube account yet.

Table 4 Benchmarking for REALPAD

Social media channels

The three websites are all linked to their social media pages. The main social media channels being used are Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Among the three companies, Instagram is used only by VTS and mainly for uploading photos of team building and internal activities. Propertybase and VTS have their own LinkedIn profile while REALPAD linked their website to EASYCORE website due to the fact that REALPAD is a part of EASYCORE. The LinkedIn pages are well structured, providing brief and adequate description about company, products, and contact details. Important updates

and news are also posted regularly. Regarding REALPAD case, in addition to the fact that the company do not have their official LinkedIn profile, the software was only mentioned as one of EASYCORE products, otherwise there are no further information or articles shared.

As it was shown in the table above, VTS and Propertybase both have a great number of followers on twitters, which are 3695 and 1926 respectively. The number of followers as well as the likes and retweets on their tweets were gained by updating relevant content daily and using the right hashtags to attract the right audiences. Propertybase has about 2675 tweets and VTS has 3718 tweets, these tweets can be industry news, market trends, and blog posts from the websites, online articles, and discussions with other Twitter users about certain topics, reports, and analytics. About REALPAD Twitter account currently has 260 tweets and 250 followers. It can be seen on the company twitter site that tweets which mentioned the relevant topics in real estate technology receive more likes and retweets by people who are working in the same industry or who have great concern about the field. In short, by observing at the two competitor's Twitter sites, several strategies can be detected and applied to management of the case company channel.

Lastly, as Facebook is the most widely-used social media channel nowadays, it is also important to examine the way the competitors managing their channels in order to see if it is worth using in B2B business. The observation showed that Propertybase, VTS and REALPAD have 2000, 488 and 173 likes on their Facebook page respectively. In terms of posts on the pages, VTS and Propertybase have relatively similar contents to what they post on Twitter. Among the three companies, only Propertybase is using Facebook ads as it attract more likes than the rest. However, on all three companies' Facebook page, comments, shares or any kind of interaction do not happen often. After all, while on Twitter more industry news and relevant discussions are updated daily; the contents being shared on Facebook are mainly about companies' activities, contents from company's blog, related articles and other announcements, changes or important events. It can be pointed out here that in this particular industry, Facebook is used as a channel to present the business and its activities to other Facebook's users, which is different from Twitter as a tool for networking with people who share the same interest as well as potential customers in real estate development.

The comparison has clearly identified these two competitor's strategy on using social media tools. As a matter of fact, Facebook is a great online marketing tool, however, in this case study, Twitter plays a more important role in interacting with potential customers and partners and increasing brand awareness. Besides, LinkedIn is also a very essential tool that any business should take into consideration.

4.5 Results of survey on consumer behaviors

An online questionnaire was conducted in order to serve the purpose of studying online marketing methods used by B2B companies, the important elements of company website and problems arise from using social media marketing as well as email marketing. The questionnaire was created with Google Forms and sent to partner companies of REALPAD. There were 18 out of 20 companies from 8 different countries: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Russia, Philippines, Luxembourg, USA, Gibraltar took part in this questionnaire. All of these companies are small to medium sized real estate developers.

The result of the questionnaire is analyzed and described in details in this section. We focus more on discussing the findings of a few most important questions that help produce marketing recommendations in the end of the report.

4.5.1 Customer and customer awareness analysis

What is your size of business? (18 responses)

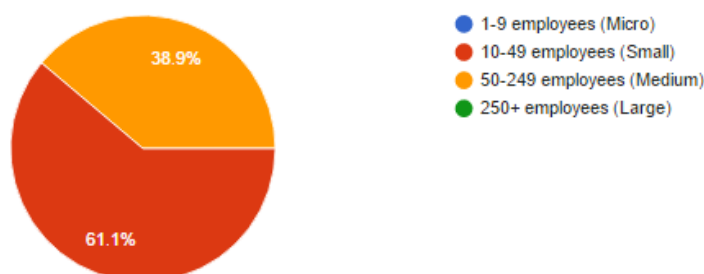


Figure 14 Size of business among the recipients

The first chart shows the percentage of companies that took part in the questionnaire based on their size of business. As mentioned before, all of the companies,

which are currently partners with REALPAD, operate their business in either small or medium size. The number of small sized companies with 10 to 49 employees occupies about 61 percent of all the partner companies. Other 39 percent belongs to medium sized companies.

how do you know about REALPAD? (18 responses)

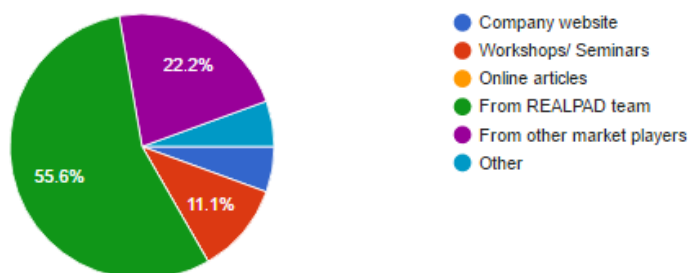


Figure 15 How partner companies knew about REALPAD

The chart above demonstrates the proportion of sources that led current customers to know about REALPAD. It is remarkable that more than a half (56 percent) of respondents answered that they discovered REALPAD from the company's team, which means REALPAD team has done their marketing function effectively to promote their brand through personal selling. The second most used sources that makes up around 22 percent of the chart was from other market players' recommendation, which means REALPAD has a good reputation in the market, particularly in Czech Republic. This result reflects the fact that "Word of mouth" marketing still plays a crucial role in the company's strategy. Workshops and seminars is the next source that helps REALPAD be recognized by their partners, which takes 11 percent of the all responses. A very small number of respondents chose company website and other sources for this question and no company detected REALPAD through online articles making it the most unlikely source of all.

In short, the chart indicates that REALPAD's strategy to promote the company is still relies a lot on traditional marketing. The reason for this result may stem from the fact that REALPAD targets small and medium sized business of real estate market that do not focus much on online marketing material.

4.5.2 SEO usage analysis

The next questions in the survey focus on investigating which kind of SEO that companies are more likely to use in their basis business operation.

On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level, how often do you get the information of a company from these sources?

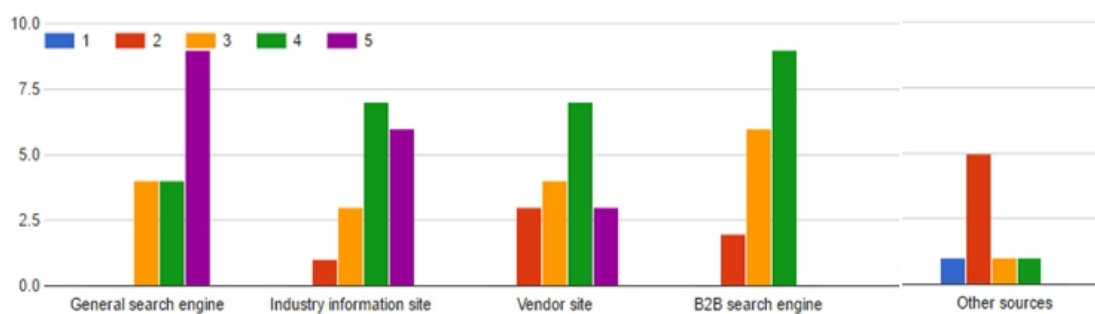


Figure 16 Sources that are used to get information of a company

The graph above presents the level of frequency of usage of different search engines that partner companies use to do research on another player. It is not surprising when the most common tool that all of companies use is general search engine, which can be Google, Yahoo and other online platforms. Industry information site is also a source of information that many companies highly rated as their most frequent search engine. An example of a popular industry information site is Inman. Another source that has the highest ranking from the rest respondents is vendor site. B2B search engine is the source that also receives high grade even though it was not once in the highest level.

To conclude, based on this result, in order to make the presence of the REALPAD more visible to other companies in the market, it is advisable to ensure that the company is searchable on all four of the search engines, especially general search engine and industry information site. The below graph shows the frequency level of usage of the most well-known general search engine tools. Google defeated all other search engine tools to become the most frequently used tool. Yahoo took the second place with much lower rate. Ask, Bing, and AltaVista are not even in the race.

On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level, how often do you use these search engine tools?

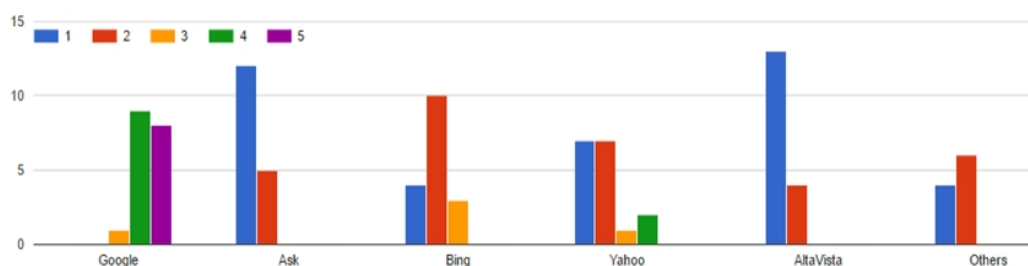


Figure 17 Usage frequency of different types of search engine

4.5.3 Website analysis

The next questions of the survey are given to partner companies with the purpose of evaluating the importance of company website as well the importance of each elements that contribute in a website.

On the scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate the importance of the website of a company?
(18 responses)

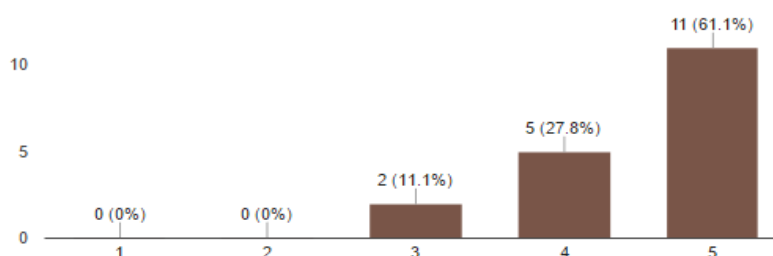


Figure 18 The importance of a company's website

When being asked to rate how important the website of a company is, 16 out of 18 respondents agreed to put it on 2 of the highest level (60 percent chose level 5 and 28 percent chose level 4). This means company website is undeniably a key factor that cannot be neglected when it comes to online marketing.

The following graph below shows the evaluation of companies about the importance of different elements that should be included in a company website. According the result, Product information received a notably high rating when all the respondents considered it the most important factor that they expect to see on a company web-

site. Customer review was surprisingly estimated as the second most essential contribution to a business web page as 10 out of 18 companies chose it for level 5. Other factors that had the similarly high position following Customer reviews are Contact info, online customer support window and Company blog. Introduction of the company and Success story gained less votes for the highest importance level; however, these two elements still surpassed Social media networks and Clients and partners list. Lastly, Team members received a neutral rate from respondents, which means it would not affect a lot on a company's website if this element is not included.

What kind of content do you expect to see on a company's website and on the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most important, how do you rate them?

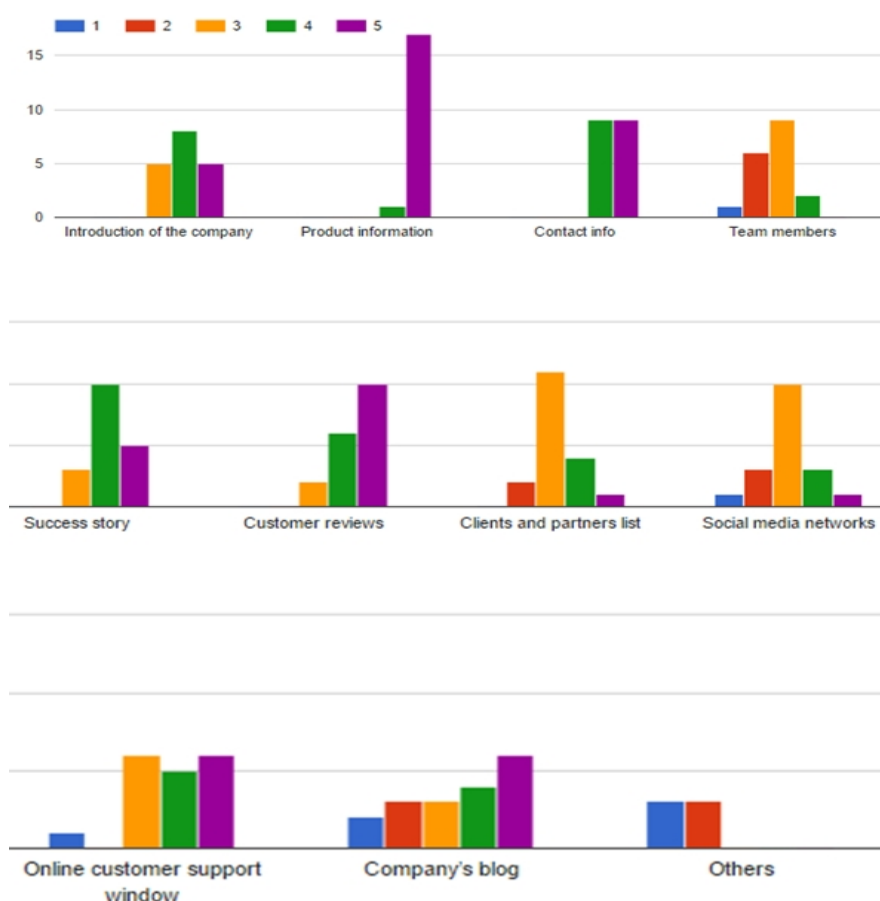


Figure 19 Elements that are expected to be on a company's website

To sum up, based on the collected data, owning a web page online is a fundamental job for any company. The survey also provides an insight from other companies' point of view of which elements are truly important on a website. It is suggested for REAL-PAD that besides providing product information, it is highly useful to include custom-

er reviews which currently there are only two reviews on their website. Online customer support window is also one factor that should be taken into account to implement in the future, as it would help the company boost their relationship with customers.

4.5.4 Social media usage analysis

The following questions will concentrate on discussing social media and the purpose of B2B companies when using this channel.

The graph shown below presents the usage frequency level of different social media of partner companies. Facebook, as always, leads the race as it received the most choices to be the most commonly used social networking site. The second place belongs to LinkedIn with seven times being chosen for highest level of usage frequency. This result is definitely reasonable because LinkedIn has been widely used by B2B marketers for their marketing strategy as mentioned previously in the report. The graph also shows that Twitter and YouTube are witnessing a considerable attention from B2B companies when they also received the highest rate scores. Instagram and Google plus, on the other hand, did not present a significant role as reflected in the responses of companies took part in the questionnaire.

On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level, how often do you use the following social networking websites?

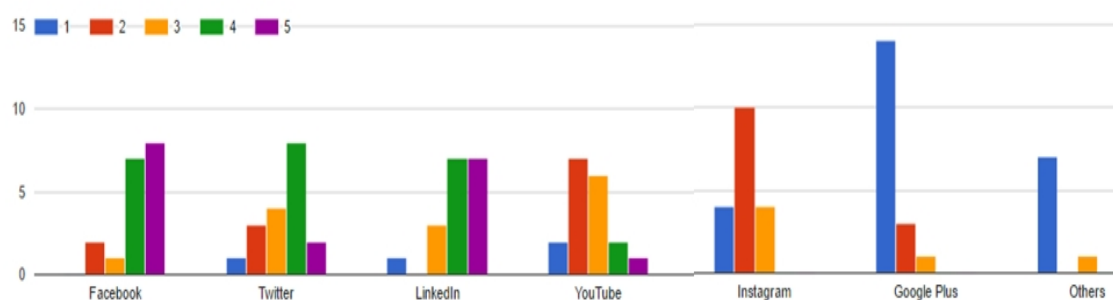


Figure 20 Usage frequency of different social media

In over all, Facebook and LinkedIn were still proven to be the choice of most B2B partner companies of REALPAD, which means the company would have to keep their content of these two social media is efficient and up-to-date on daily basis. Another

notable point is that Twitter and YouTube are becoming trendy marketing channels that also should be highly considered for REALPAD in their future social media-marketing plan.

The graph below illustrates the results of when partner companies were asked about the purpose of using social media. Half of them agreed that they use social media in order to build relationship with clients and partners. The second most common activity of these B2B companies on social media is researching, which might stem from that fact that it is easy to find useful information about customers as well as other players in the market through social media. On the contrary, social media does not appear to be an ideal place for trading and banking for B2B companies. The reason for this might be because of the security risks on social media, especially when it involves great amount of money transfer in real estate business

On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being highest, please rate your purpose of using social media

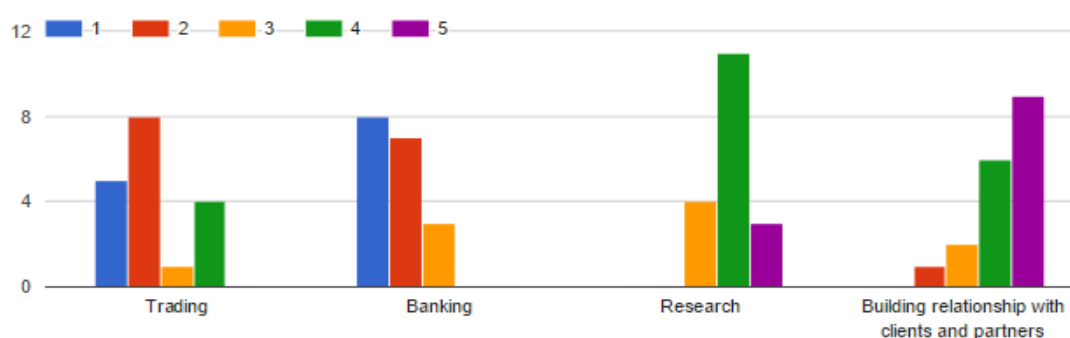


Figure 21 Companies' purposes on using social media

The next question was made as requested from REALPAD's CEO - Marian to study if partner companies follow potential products for their companies on Facebook. According to him, it is essential to know if it is reasonable to use Facebook as a promoting channel because B2B customers has different behavior from B2C customers. The result is shown on the below graph and it actually signified this difference. About 67 percent of respondents said that they did not follow potential products on Facebook, which means they might prefer and use other ways to get in touch with companies that provide potential products.

Do you follow potential products for your company on social media?
(18 responses)

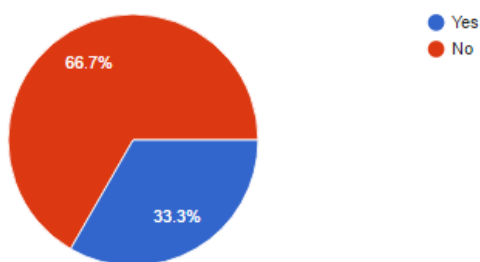


Figure 22 Percentage of companies follow and do not follow potential products on social media

4.5.5 Email marketing analysis

In order to understand how partner companies react and their opinions on email marketing, three questions were given in the survey.

The first question asked respondents whether they feel comfortable with receiving frequent emails or newsletters from a familiar brand or not. It was obvious that 89 percent of all respondents said that it did not bother them at all to receive these piece of content, which is a good sign for REALPAD since the company also want to focus on email marketing and sending out regular newsletters to their customers.

Does it bother you to receive frequent emails/newsletters from a brand you already know?
(18 responses)

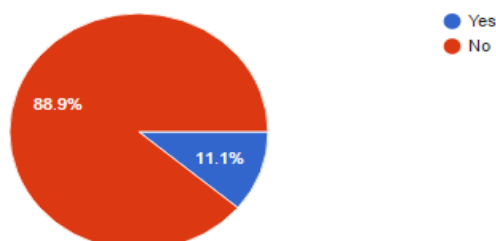


Figure 23 Opinions of companies on receiving frequent emails/ newsletter

The next two questions investigated more in the reason why partners companies had different choices previously. For those who are more willing to receive emails and newsletter, the question was “What kind of information they would like to receive?”

The graph below shows that 44 percent of all respondents chose that they were open to receive any information from brands. Most of the rest of respondents chose Product updates (25 percent) and Industry news and trends (19 percent). Other few companies preferred to receive Service guide & instruction, and Special promotions/events. This result demonstrates a good opportunity of growth for REALPAD's email marketing plan as well as suggests the company with which information can be delivered to their customers.

If no, what kind of information you would like to receive? (16 responses)

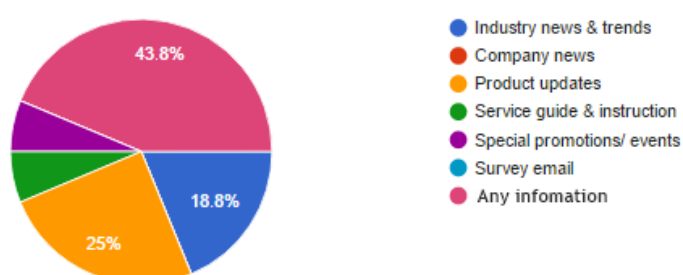


Figure 24 Types of information companies want to receive by emails

For those companies who did not want to receive email and newsletters, the below graph explains their reason. 77 percent of respondents claimed that they did not have time to read this kind of content. This result is understandable since B2B companies; especially companies that are working in real estate industry are very busy dealing with great amount of data and information per day. The graph also shows another reason of refusing to receive emails and newsletters were because companies thought that the content in these emails was not relevant.

If yes, what is the reason why you dont like to receive them? (13 responses)

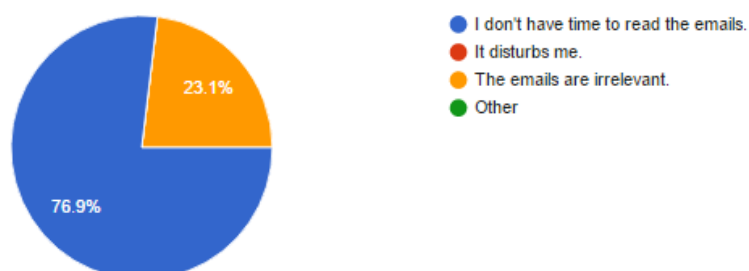


Figure 25 Reasons why companies do not want to receive emails/ newsletters

To conclude the survey, respondents were asked to rate the most effective way of marketing in their opinions. The graph below shows the evaluation of partner companies for different marketing methods. The method that received the most highest votes (8 votes) was Search engine marketing and followed by Traditional marketing with 6 times being rated for level 5 and Email marketing with 4 times being rated for level 5 and 10 times on level 4 of effectiveness. Affiliate marketing gained an average position in the ranking; however it can become an option for REALPAD in the future. Lastly, social media appeared to be a method that did not work as effectively as others for B2B companies in real estate market but it is still an essential marketing channel that cannot be ignored.

On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being highest, please rate the most effective way of marketing in your opinion?

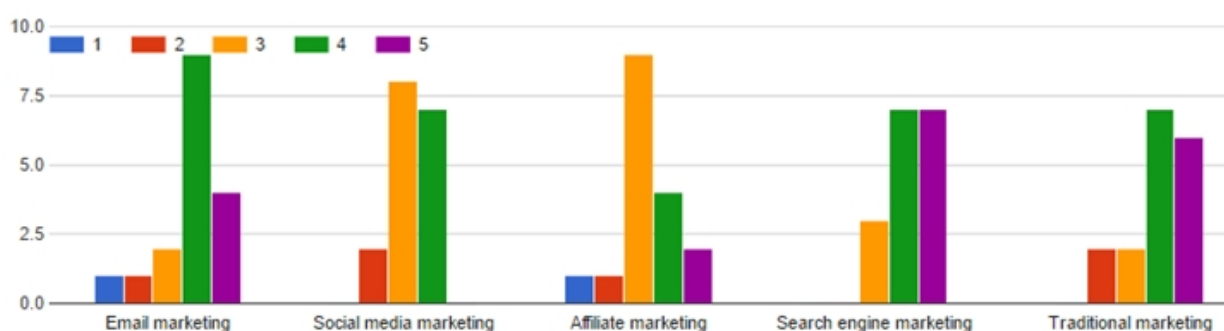


Figure 26 The most effective way of marketing

5 Suggestions based on the empirical study

This chapter will present a series of recommendations on communication channels of the case company based on results of the conducted research linked to the theoretical background. With each of the digital marketing channel, suggestions on how to communicate more effectively will be discussed whether it serves the objectives of nurturing leads, increasing brand awareness or strengthen customer relationship.

5.1 Search engine marketing

First of all, in terms of paid search marketing, since most of the clients choose Google as their main search engine they use, Google AdWords are the most ideal tool for PPC. It is recommended to divide the whole campaign into smaller campaigns tar-

getting different groups of countries. These countries can be located in the same continents or using the same language. Creating different campaigns will make it easier to set ad groups, keywords and last but not least the bid amount. PPC is all about setting campaign and continuous optimization to find out which keywords are more effective and at the same time make a list of the irrelevant keywords to put them in the negative search.

For REALPAD, because the company knows exactly to whom they are targeting, therefore the keywords will not be too general and attract unnecessary traffic. Important keywords and phrases are: real estate developers, real estate development, customer relationship management, sales administration, financial planning, contact management, deal management, software, solution, platform, affordable, easy to customize, cloud-based, secure, and mobile. Such tools like Keyword tool from Word stream are very useful in combining these keywords into longer phrases to add to the ad groups and then the phrases are ready to be tested. Optimization process should be implemented weekly to find out what are the most effective keywords and ad texts as well as evaluate the efficiency of the campaigns through quality score, click-through rate, conversion rate, cost per conversion and wasted spend.

In addition, despite the fact that SEO is more time consuming and more complicated than PPC, it still plays an important role in a company's digital marketing strategies in the long run. If the REALPAD is craving to win the competition on the organic listings search, it is necessary to hire a skillful SEO experts to establish the system and continuously on building links, HTML tags and optimizing the website.

5.2 Website and content marketing

First of all, considering the newly redesigned website, it is believed to function well and provides adequate information about the software. There are small improvements that could be taken into consideration are to translate the website into various languages such as German, Russian, and French; or build a small online chat window where visitors can make request and ask questions without having to fill in the contact form. There are many different online tools supporting website live chat and have been receiving plenty of positive feedback, for example: Intercom, Fresh desk or Live agent.

Secondly, in terms of the contents on the website, product information and customer reviews are considered as the two most desired information to REALPAD customers according to results of the survey. As it can be seen on the website, the description of the product are quite informative however there are only two customer stories, or in another word, reviews while the software is currently serving more than 20 clients. To some extents, it might be complicated to create many customers' success stories but brief reviews on the product are definitely obtainable. Nevertheless, the case company should also learn from their competitors to make short videos of clients talking about the experience of using the software since video is a very effective method and is promised to bring high ROI.

Thirdly, when it comes to content marketing, one needs to acknowledge the importance of blogging. As it was mentioned in the theoretical background, a professional blog will increase the company credibility and when a company shares the knowledge and knowhow regularly it will become trusted sources and consequently there will more leads attracted to the company's website. However, in order to be seen as opinion leaders in the industry, the company needs to create valuable and noteworthy contents. At this point, it is crucial to create a solid content marketing plan for a particular period of time. Marketers need to schedule the time and content of the articles or discussion that will be published, at the same time make sure that the blogs are updated on a regular basis. Content in this real estate technology marketing mainly focuses on changes in the industry, market trends, new innovations or great improvements of current technologies, while such topics as product updates, special functions of the software, company's remarkable achievements are also highly appreciated. One important point here is to pay attention on communicating the value the software can bring to the company's prospects as well as how it can solve their problems. This is the key to attract them to return to the blog as well as the website and eventually contact the company.

5.3 Social media channels

In this particular industry which is real estate development, it is clearly seen that social media is not the most effective tool to attract new customers. Therefore, the main use of social media in this case study is to promote the content that was created on websites and blogs. The first social media channel to be considered is LinkedIn. REALPAD should build a separate profile from EASYCORE and start to join different

groups such as real estate development and real estate technology group where they publish articles and share expertise and opinions on relevant topics. LinkedIn is certainly a great place to build up network and reach desirable customers.

Besides, it is still necessary to use Twitter and Facebook to update posts daily, share articles, blogs, news or any information that is relevant and will motivate visitors to follow the page. On Twitter, one should follow popular hashtags related to real estate tech such as *retech*, *tech*, *realestatetech*, to update the industry news, and participate in discussions of the influencers and tech experts about trends, analysis, and situation. Being active on this social media and building relationship with people in the same industry will help increase the reputation of the brand positively. The strategy here is to build brand awareness among the influencers, try to get in contact with them in order to open more business cooperation. Tweetdeck is a great tool when it comes to managing the activities on Twitter to follow tags, updating posts, see who likes and shares the company's posts. It is also important to note that the channels are not only for networking, one should take into consideration mention, tag, or refer to their customers, about their projects, or share valuable information but surely under the acceptance of the clients.

Unlike Facebook and Twitter, Instagram can be a great tool to update REALPAD's daily activities, team building work and a useful way to attract talents. Updating photos about people, workplace, events, prizes and achievements can prove that a technology company but not boring where there are many internal activities and offers a great environment for employees.

There are several online tools, which support the management of several social media channels simultaneously, including the widely used platform Hootsuite. It acts as a dashboard for all social media channels, which can handle up to 10 profiles and make it more convenient for users to schedule the contents posts across multiple channels (Hootsuite).

5.4 Email marketing

As it can be seen in the survey, most of the customers are willing to receive emails from the company they have interacted to. Therefore, in similarity to content marketing, the case company also needs to establish a specific plan on email marketing

activities. First important task is to segment the email lists into group of partners, investors, sales department of the real estate developers, journalists, influencers and so on. The objective is to send more relevant emails to each group to avoid unsubscribers, increase open rate and click through rate.

Regarding the emails content, as stated in the survey analysis, 25% of REALPAD's clients would like to receive information about product updates and 19% of them are interested in industry news and trends. Service guides and instruction as well as special events, promotions also seem to receive positive responds. Accordingly, these are the topics that the case company can take into account when sending emails to the subscription list. The emails can focus on only one topic or contain mix of contents that make recipients curious and desire to know more.

In this case study, Mailchimp is considered as an ideal tool since it is very suitable for small and medium businesses. Marketers can create emails with a variety of templates, import the contact list to the system, test how the emails will appear in different devices and keep track of the email performance. Since targeted audiences are all busy working people, they tend to check and read the emails on mobile phone therefore it is crucial that the emails are mobile friendly. Additionally, in real estate industry, professional impression and credibility are utterly important therefore it is recommended that the emails should come from a real person, in this specific case the sender email can be under the name of the CEO or the sale managers.

Last but not least, one needs to constantly check the performance of the email concerning open and response rate or which recipients are interested in which content more. Besides, it is essential to regularly update the email list and focus more on subscribers that actively engage with the emails rather than who rarely opens the emails for a long period of time, for example 6 months to a year.

5.5 Affiliate marketing

Affiliate marketing has not always been a first choice for B2B companies. There are a lot of challenges and risks as discussed in the previous part of the report. However, affiliate marketing can still become a complementary channel for other marketing efforts, as well as a cost effective channel for increasing leads and sales. REALPAD can consider using some of the already successful affiliate marketing programs, for

example: Zanox, Affilinet, Impact Radius and so on. For a start-up company like REALPAD, it is recommended that the company should focus on strengthening other main marketing channels, such as SEO, email, social media and content marketing before considering to start an affiliate marketing program. After that, doing a lot of research to find a suitable and trustworthy affiliate partner would be the next step to keep in mind.

6 Conclusion and reflection on learning

The research study of the report delivered a clearer idea of how B2B companies utilize digital marketing to increase their sales and leads to compete with other players in the market. This project benefits REALPAD by providing better insights and deeper understanding of their own partner companies through survey.

Based on the collected data, at the moment REALPAD's marketing plan mostly depends on their traditional marketing channel, which is personal selling, to get closer to their customers. However, according to the survey's result, it is suggested that website marketing, SEO marketing and email marketing are the top three marketing forms that have the highest effectiveness in B2B world and require an equal concern of the company.

Challenges and risks as well as advantages are also indicated in the report for each of the marketing form, which will help REALPAD to have a good consideration and decisions when running their marketing plan. CATWOE analysis was used to identify the current situation and problems of REALPAD. Top competitors of the company were also analyzed through benchmarking. In the end of the report, specific recommendations for the company were made based on the empirical study.

There were some expected difficulties when carrying out the research as B2B businesses are usually busy and selective than B2C businesses; it took them longer time to make any decision or even just to give the responses to the surveys. The quantitative research could not reach all of partner companies of REALPAD, causing a limited number of responses, which cannot completely represent the whole target group.

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Table

Table 1 Most common content marketing goals and associated metrics that may serve as practical KPIs (Content Marketing Institute)	31
Table 2 Usage and effectiveness of social media sites for distributing content (Allen 2016)	42
Table 3 CATWOE Analysis (Elmansy).....	56
Table 4 Benchmarking for REALPAD	68

Figures

Figure 1 Structure of the thesis.....	8
Figure 2 B2B Buying decision process	9
Figure 3 Usage of various social media channels in B2B marketing (The Content Marketing Institute 2015)	14
Figure 4 Example of text ads shown in paid listings	23
Figure 5 How Google determines the position of the ad (Word stream)	24
Figure 6 An infographic show how a website works (Ruiz 2013)	34
Figure 7 An example of a comparison infographic (Go Gulf 2012).....	35
Figure 8 An example of location/map infographic (Thornton 2009)	35
Figure 9 How does affiliate marketing work? (vietdex.net 2015).....	39
Figure 10 Chart showing mobile marketing tactics used by B2B marketers (Allen 2016)	43
Figure 11 Propertybase website	64
Figure 12 VTS website	65
Figure 13 REALPAD Website	65
Figure 14 Size of business among the recipients	70
Figure 15 How partner companies knew about REALPAD	71
Figure 16 Sources that are used to get information of a company	72
Figure 17 Usage frequency of different types of search engine	73
Figure 18 The importance of a company's website	73
Figure 19 Elements that are expected to be on a company's website	74
Figure 20 Usage frequency of different social media.....	75
Figure 21 Companies' purposes on using social media	76
Figure 22 Percentage of companies follow and do not follow potential products on social media.....	77
Figure 23 Opinions of companies on receiving frequent emails/ newsletter	77
Figure 24 Types of information companies want to receive by emails	78
Figure 25 Reasons why companies do not want to receive emails/ newsletters ...	78
Figure 26 The most effective way of marketing.....	79

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Questions for interview with Marian Skvarek..... 93
Appendix 2: Survey questionnaires on usage of digital marketing channels..... 94

Appendix 1: Questions for interview with Marian Skvarek

1. What is the problem that you recognized?
2. Do you define any issue with marketing function?
3. Where do you see the company's position in the international market?
4. Do you want to expand the project on other channels? If yes, are you willing to support the idea of improving communication channels?
5. From a B2B perspective, is there any channels you find it potentially effective for the company?
6. What is the vision of the company and what is your expected outcome of the project?
7. What factors do you consider as difficulty and constraint when developing this project?
8. What is your estimated budget to spend on digital marketing?

Appendix 2: Survey questionnaires on usage of digital marketing channels

1. What is your product/service?
2. What is your size of business?
3. Where does your business locate?
4. Have you heard about REALPAD?
5. If yes, how do you know about REALPAD?
6. On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level, how often do you get the information of a company from these sources?
 - General search engine
 - Industry information site
 - Vendor site
 - B2B search engine
 - Other sources
7. On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level, how often do you use these search engine tools?
 - Google
 - Ask
 - Bing
 - Yahoo
 - AltaVista
 - Others
8. On the scale of 1 to 5, how do you rate the importance of the website of a company?
9. What kind of content do you expect to see on a company's website and on the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most important, how do you rate them?
 - Introduction of the company
 - Product information
 - Contact info
 - Team members
 - Success story
 - Customer reviews
 - Clients and partners list
 - Social media networks
 - Online customer support window
 - Company's blog

- Others
10. On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being highest, please rate the most effective way of marketing in your opinion?
- Email marketing
 - Social media marketing
 - Affiliate marketing
 - Search engine marketing
 - Traditional marketing
11. On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the highest level, how often do you use the following social networking websites?
- Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - YouTube
 - Instagram
 - Google Plus
 - Others
12. On the scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being highest, please rate your purpose of using social media
- Trading
 - Banking
 - Research
 - Building relationship with clients and partners
13. Does it bother you to receive frequent emails/newsletters from a brand you already know?
- Yes
 - No
14. If no, what kind of information you would like to receive?
- Industry news & trends
 - Company news
 - Product updates
 - Service guide & instruction
 - Special promotions/ events
 - Survey email
 - Other/ Any information
15. If yes, what is the reason why you dont like to receive them?

- I don't have time to read the emails.
- It disturbs me.
- The emails are irrelevant.
- Other

16. Do you follow potential products for your company on social media?

Yes/No