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# B2B MARKETING PLAN FOR THE UK MARKET

– Case: Plantui

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- Case: Plantui

This thesis has been done for the commissioner company Plantui Oy, which produces smart gardens and plant capsules. Plantui already operates in the United Kingdom but would like to grow their business there. The main goal of this thesis was to create a B2B marketing plan. This plan aims to help Plantui grow their brand awareness and reach more retailers in the United Kingdom.

The theoretical part explains firstly the basic concepts of B2B marketing and integrated marketing communications. It then explains more in detail digital content marketing, marketing communications planning, and trade show marketing.

The research was a qualitative research with semi-structured interviews as the data gathering method. These interviews were analyzed with the inductive method, using summarizing.

The analysis starts with a closer look at United Kingdom market, to see what is the current state of the market for international entry. According to the analysis, Brexit brings uncertainty, but the United Kingdom continues to be a strong economy, and thus favorable for Plantui's business expansion.

The final result of the thesis is a B2B marketing communications plan. It consists of a marketing plan that is divided by channels, explaining what each channel will be used for, what kind of content will be shared, the key performance indicators, the frequency, as well as human resources and working time needed. This is accompanied by a content plan which details what kind of content will be sent to the lead based on their stage in the buying decision process. In addition, the target group, UK retailers, as well as possible trade shows to attend are presented. The main methods to grow brand awareness and to reach the retailers are content marketing using LinkedIn both organically and with paid ads, the company retailer landing page, the company blog, a B2B newsletter, and trade shows.

### KEYWORDS:

Marketing plan, business-to-business marketing, United Kingdom, content marketing

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## B2B-MARKKINOINTISUUNNITELMA ISON-BRITANNIAN MARKKINOILLE

- Case: Plantui

Tämä opinnäytetyö on tehty suomalaiselle Plantui Oylle. Plantui tekee smart gardeneita ja näihin kuuluvia kasvukapseleita. Plantui toimii jo Isossa-Britanniassa, mutta haluaa kasvattaa myyntimääriään. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on luoda B2B-markkinointisuunnitelma, jonka avulla Plantui voi kasvattaa brändinsä tunnettavuutta sekä tavoittaa lisää jälleenmyyjiä Isossa-Britanniassa.

Teoreettinen osuus kertoo ensin yleisesti B2B-markkinoinnista sekä integroidusta markkinointiviestinnästä. Sen jälkeen syvennyttään digitaaliseen sisältömarkkinointiin, markkinointisuunnitteluun sekä messumarkkinointiin.

Tutkimus tehtiin kvalitatiivisena ja tiedonkeruumenetelmä oli teemahaastattelut. Haastattelut analysoitiin induktiivisellä menetelmällä käyttäen referointia.

Opinnäytetyön analyysiosio tutkii tarkemmin Iso-Britannian taloudellista tilaa kuvaillakseen tämän hetkisen tilanteen ulkomaalaisen yrityksen näkökulmasta. Analyysiin mukaan Brexit tuo markkinoille epävarmuutta, mutta Isossa-Britanniassa on edelleen vahva talous, joten ympäristö on suotuisa Plantuin laajentumiselle.

Opinnäytetyön lopputulos on B2B-markkinointiviestintäsuunnitelma. Se koostuu markkinointisuunnitelmasta, joka on jaettu käytettyjen kanavien mukaan. Tämä osio kertoo mihin kanavia käytetään, minkälaista sisältöä niillä jaetaan, miten tuloksia mitataan, kuinka usein kanavilla julkaistaan, sekä kuinka paljon työvoimaa ja työaikaa tarvitaan. Tämän lisäksi suunnitelmaan kuuluu sisältösuunnitelma, joka kertoo yksityiskohtaisesti millaista sisältöä potentiaalisille asiakkaille lähetetään missäkin vaiheessa asiakkaan päätöksentekoprosessia. Lisäksi esitellään kohderyhmä, Ison-Britannian jälleenmyyjiä, sekä messuja, joille Plantui voi osallistua. Pääkanavat brändin tunnettavuuden kasvattamiseksi sekä jälleenmyyjien tavoittamiseksi ovat messut sekä sisältömarkkinointi johon kuuluu LinkedIn-markkinointi niin orgaanisesti kuin mainostenkin avulla, jälleenmyyjäsivu nettisivustolla, yrityksen blogi sekä B2B-utiskirje.

ASIASANAT:

Markkinointisuunnitelma, business-to-business markkinointi, Iso-Britannia, sisältömarkkinointi

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS**

B2B	business-to-business
B2C	business-to-consumer
DMU	decision-making unit
IMC	integrated marketing communications
KPI	key performance indicator
SEO	search engine optimization
SME	small and medium-sized enterprises
UK	United Kingdom

# 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has been done for the commissioner company Plantui Oy. The purpose of the thesis was to design a B2B marketing plan for the United Kingdom market. The topic of the thesis was defined by the needs of the commissioner company, Plantui.

Plantui is a Finnish company founded in 2012 (LinkedIn, 2017). Their vision is “Everyone deserves a garden” and thus, their main products are smart gardens and plant capsules (Plantui, 2017). Smart gardens are devices that allow anyone to grow their own herbs without soil or any previous gardening knowledge. Plantui already operates internationally in Europe and Asia, and they are looking into growing their market share in the United Kingdom. Plantui is headquartered in Helsinki and currently employs eight people.

The thesis will be a tool for Plantui to find new retailers on UK markets. As the final product of this thesis was a concrete marketing plan, they can start implementing it immediately without having to do extensive research. The aim of the thesis is for Plantui to have a good idea of what they should do in order to grow their operations in the UK.

On the contrary of business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing, business-to-business (B2B) marketing has not been researched so much, especially taking into consideration the changes during the last years in the digital environment. In general, B2B businesses have been slower to implement digital and content marketing, than those targeting their services directly to consumers (Michaelidou, et al., 2011). This may be due to the fact that B2B is still seen as very relationship-based, however, digital tools can ease relationship building for the B2B businesses. The main studies in the past years have been those of Holliman & Rowley (2014) and Järvinen & Taiminen (2016).

The main objective of this thesis is to create a business-to-business marketing plan for Plantui to find retailers in the United Kingdom. The primary research question that was answered in this thesis is “What kind of marketing activities should Plantui do in order to attract retailers in the United Kingdom?”. The secondary questions are:

- How do we get Plantui to be sold through the most suitable channels?
- What kind of digital presence will improve the brand awareness?
- What kind of content should be sent to the leads in each stage of the decision-making process?

- What kind of environment is the United Kingdom for Plantui?

The purpose of these questions is to identify the target group for the marketing plan and the channels through which they will be reached. By answering these questions, the thesis will be able to find solutions to the main issues Plantui is facing currently in the United Kingdom. The data collection methods used were desktop research and semi-structured interviews that were analyzed using the inductive method.

The current thesis starts with a literature review that takes a closer look at B2B marketing, integrated marketing communications, digital content marketing, B2B marketing planning, and trade show marketing. It then continues by describing the methodology used for data collection and analysis. Lastly, the empirical part of the thesis firstly analyzes the UK market, after which the interviews are analyzed, and lastly, the process of creating the B2B marketing plan is explained.

The unique contribution of the current thesis to the B2B marketing research is the fact that it is primarily focused on the internationalization process of a Finnish company to the United Kingdom market. To my knowledge, this has not yet been studied. The thesis will bring valuable information for Finnish companies looking to target retailers in the United Kingdom. Lastly, and most importantly, the thesis will provide valuable information to the commissioner company.



## 2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

This chapter will have a closer look at marketing in the B2B environment, integrated marketing communications, as well as digital content marketing and trade show marketing which will be the two main marketing activities used in the empirical part.

### 2.1 Business-to-Business Marketing Communications

Marketing communications are all the communications related to marketing, in other words, all the messages sent out to the target customers (Copley, 2013, p. 8). This includes for example advertising, but also sales promotion, public relations, and direct sales. The aim of marketing communications is often to change attitudes or behavior or increase the level of knowledge with an end result of influencing the customer to buy the product or service offered (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, p. 294).

Business-to-Business (B2B) marketing is the act of marketing products or services to other businesses or organizations (Brafton, 2017). Compared to business-to-consumer (B2C) marketing, B2B marketing has a narrower customer base and less end-user information available. In general, personal connections have more importance in B2B marketing and long relationships between suppliers and buyers are common. This is because the order sizes are usually bigger, making the risks also bigger, and there are fewer buyers in each segment. The main differences include the more rational approach used in B2B marketing, the fact that communications are aimed at groups instead of individuals, and the usage of industry-specific media read by decision-making unit members. When it comes to marketing communications, the main difference between B2B and B2C is that in B2B marketing there is a lack of the use of mass media as the number of buyers is smaller. (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013.)

Decisions in B2B marketing are usually made on a more rational basis (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013). Emotion does have some effect, but in general decision making is a lengthier and more thought out process than in consumer marketing. This is because in comparison to B2C marketing where the decision to buy is made by an individual, in B2B marketing there is usually a decision-making unit (DMU) involved. This decision-making unit consists of different people inside the organization that is involved in making purchasing decisions. These people usually have different roles and levels of power

inside the DMU. This is why it is important for a company to define the members of the decision-making unit and their roles during the market research phase. Table 2 shows the average amount of people influencing purchasing decision based on the company size. Usually, the newer or riskier the decision and process in question, the more people are involved in influencing and making the decision (McDonald & Wilson, 2011, p. 267).

Number of employees	Average number of buying influences	Average number of contacts made by salespeople
0-200	3.42	1.72
201-400	4.85	1.75
401-1,000	5.81	1.90
1,000+	6.50	1.65

Table 1: Buying influences by company size (Source: McDonald & Wilson, 2011)

Although decisions are made in the DMUs, these units consist of people making the decisions. This also means that in marketing communications, the advertisements should be suitable for many different types of people each with different likings, attitudes, and roles within the DMU. Business customers rarely buy only due to advertising activities, but advertising does play a key role in B2B marketing. For example, one of the jobs of advertising is to create a more favorable climate for personal selling. People are more likely to buy from brands that they are aware of. Another responsibility of advertising is to reach either inaccessible or unknown buying influences. Recently, advertising has also become more important in lead generation due to inbound marketing. Other duties of advertising are for example to spread information and enhance brand awareness. (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013)

An important aspect of B2B marketing is the creation of mutual value (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Personal relations are more common in B2B marketing. This means that also relationship building has a greater importance. Although purchases in B2B environments are not always repetitive and partnerships long-term, are developing and maintaining relationships crucial for success (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013). Even with short-term partnerships, there should be more involvement than just a simple transaction and both parties should benefit from the partnership.

This is why trust plays an important role in B2B marketing. The key to a successful B2B marketing person is to portray this trustworthiness through the marketing communications. Fancy, over-the-top descriptions that are common for B2C marketing

communications will have the opposite effect in business markets (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013). For this reason, business marketing should portray more fact than emotion. In general, the marketing communications strategy needs to be the same as the organization's strategy. Although business buyers actively seek information more than consumers, they rarely buy only because of advertising. This is why it is important to design an integrated marketing communications plan that includes also more personal approaches.

When trying to get a product to a major retailer, you need to make sure that there is a value proposition for them as well. When creating the marketing plan, this value proposition needs to be clearly communicated through the marketing activities. According to Anna Rigby, the head of buying home at John Lewis, communicating the values of the company and sustainability in the making of the products is also important (Enterprise Nation, 2017). This is why the main goals of the marketing campaign are to communicate the value proposition of the product and tell the story of Plantui as a company. Secondly, it is important to identify who is the buyer in the organization. This can be easily done through LinkedIn (Nogle, 2016). After they have been identified, social media ads can be directly targeted at them. You can also see which influencers they are following on social media, and offer the product to them as a trial. After you have made sure that the buyer has seen and heard about your product, you should contact them, preferably via a common contact. The contact message needs to have a clear call to action, such as a date to schedule a meeting (Nogle, 2016). The key is to be persistent even if you do not receive an answer at first. In addition, if you can meet the person in a trade fair before contacting them, that is even better. Public relations, such as a mention in an article, will also increase the chances of your target buyer seeing your product.

## 2.2 Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the combination of different marketing activities with one consistent message. In other words, it can be seen as a unified strategy to communicate a message through different channels. The different marketing activities persuade, inform, remind, and entertain the target customers. The point is that each activity reinforces the message communicated by the other activities. (Copley, 2013, pp. 12-13.)

Integrated marketing communications are becoming more and more popular especially with all the clutter found online. There are numerous messages everywhere online and these can bring about confusion or even irritation to the customer. Even a B2B customer is affected by all the messages seen on different media. On the other hand, the marketer is always fighting for the attention of the customer with numerous other marketers. With one clear message, IMC helps target customers to remember the marketing message and spot it from all the clutter as the messages are already familiar to them from other channels. With a consistent message, the impact of the message will be bigger. (Copley, 2013, pp. 12-13.)

The development of social media has also brought a change in the traditional mass communication. With the internet, consumers have more access to information and before making a purchasing decision, they do extensive research. Instead of blindly taking in messages, consumers nowadays want to communicate with the companies and brands. They want to feel an emotional connection with the brand and buy not only a product, but an experience. This is why IMC is important to solidify the brand in the minds of the target customers. (IE Business School, 2017.)

Nowadays marketing is more and more analytical due to the technological advancement and different tools found online. Messages can be targeted more precisely and cost-per-click and cost-per-acquisition models allow companies to only pay for the results the marketing campaigns bring. For example, on LinkedIn you can target an advertisement based on the person's job title or seniority as well as location.

The point of IMC is to make sure that the message the company is sending out is consistent throughout, no matter what channel the customer sees the message in (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, p. 313). The Schramm model of the communication process explains clearly how the message sent by a company or brand is transferred to the customer (Figure 1). The goal of the communication process is for the receiver to understand the message as the sender intended. The sender encodes the message by putting it into an understandable form for the receiver. There are always personal experiences and knowledge involved in this. The message is communicated to the receiver through the medium. This is the channel used in marketing. Once the receiver receives the message, they decode it using their own experiences and knowledge. This is why it is important to use shared knowledge when encoding the message so that the receiver will understand its objective. The marketer can gather feedback through market research to see if the messages are understood clearly. The marketing communication

process also includes noise, which is anything that can interrupt the transition of the message. (Copley, 2013, pp. 29-31.)

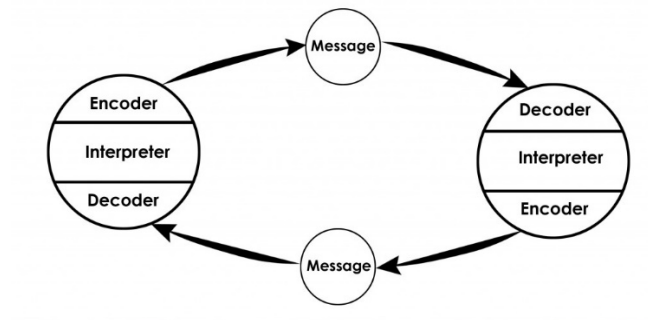


Figure 1: Schramm's Model of Communication (Source: Communication Theory, 2016)

In addition to understanding how messages are communicated, it is also important to understand the customer decision-making process when planning integrated marketing communications. The stages the customer goes through are need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. A customer in each stage needs different types of messages or content communicated to them. That is why it is important to identify which stage the target customers most likely are in. Many forget that it is important to continue marketing activities even after the purchase to keep the whole buying experience positive and solve any dissatisfaction issues. (Kotler, *et. al.* 2005, pp. 279-287.)

In B2B marketing, the *customer* in question is the decision-making unit and the B2B buying decision-making process has a few more steps. There are eight stages in the B2B decision-making process which are presented in Figure 2. First, the organization realizes they have a problem that cannot be solved internally. They then identify the characteristics and the quantity of what is needed to solve the problem. Based on this a specification of a product is drawn up. After the organization is aware of what they need, they make a search for possible supply sources. The potential suppliers will commonly submit plans and products for trial before the selection of the suppliers is done and an order is placed. When the goods or services have been received, they are checked based on the specification made. Many times in B2B contexts the company will place repeat orders if they are satisfied with the products or services received. The last stage is to evaluate the performance of the supplier company. This is a key stage where the customer makes their mind on if the product or service delivered on the promises of the

advertising and met the expectations of the customer. (McDonald & Wilson, 2011, pp. 266-267; Vitale, et al., 2011, p. 58-66.)

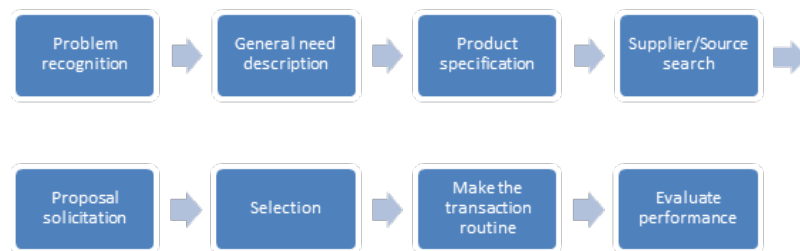


Figure 2: B2B Buying Decision Process (Vitale, et al., 2011)

The individual steps of the buying decision process can also be categorized into four stages: the definition stage which includes problem recognition, general need description, and product specification, the selection stage consisting of supplier/source search, proposal solicitation, and selection, the deliver selection stage where the transaction is made routine, and the end game stage where the performance is evaluated and the job resold. The definition stage is when a possible solution is tried to describe for the first time and the size of the buying center is decided. Suppliers that have been found successful are often involved especially in the process of developing the specification. The selection might have already happened during the definition stage, but during the selection stage each member of the decision-making unit might have their own favorite supplier, which may complicate the decision-making process. If the purchase in question is a modified or straight re-buy, it will most likely be done using existing suppliers. In the deliver solution stage, the solution is customized to fit the specific technical needs of the customer company and the logistics processes of the supplier and the buyer are integrated to serve the customer better. Lastly, the end game stage is not the end of the buying process, but the start of possibly a new purchase from the same supplier. This is also where the customer will evaluate if they made the right decision in the selection stage. (Vitale, et al., 2011, pp. 58-66.)

When looking at the B2B buying decision process, it is not always linear, but the stages happen simultaneously. In addition, as the process involves more people, different decisions will be made at the same time. The members are driven by their professional responsibilities. This is why when making the decision, it is based on three needs: the organization's needs and how the benefits of the product or service fill them, the

individual needs based on the buyer's professional responsibilities, and the individual's personal needs such as recognition or quality of life. (Vitale, et al., 2011, pp. 58-66.)

### 2.3 Digital content marketing

Content marketing is the process of creating and delivering valuable content to target customers in order to engage them with the company. The content does not necessarily need to mention the company's name but is focused on the target customer's individual needs by for example helping them with a problem or answering their doubts. Understanding these needs requires active listening through gathering customer feedback and social media monitoring. Content marketing can be done in different formats. Some of the most common ones are webinars, white papers, newsletters, digital brochures, blog texts, social media posts, infographics, pictures, and videos. Many times content is on the company's website and is spread through different social media channels. (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016.)

According to Content Marketing Institute (2017), 91% of B2B organizations in North America use content marketing nowadays. The purpose of inbound marketing is to guide the customer through the customer journey starting from attraction all the way through the post-purchase stage. This is an important stage especially in the B2B environment where purchases tend to happen on a more personal basis. The brand of the company is also of great importance when long-term partnerships are formed. Usually inbound marketing includes content marketing. (Holliman & Rowley, 2014.)

The six main objectives of content marketing are building or reinforcing brand awareness, creating more effective lead conversion and nurturing, increasing customer conversion, optimizing customer service, increasing customer upsell, and creating brand subscribers (Rose & Pulizzi, 2011). Out of these, B2B marketers mentioned lead generation as the most common objective in a study by Holliman & Rowley (2014). Especially for B2B marketers, content marketing can be seen as a way to guide the customers through the sales funnel and qualify leads (Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). However, even though lead generation is important, the purpose of content marketing is not to sell directly, or use sales-related language. The next most important reasons were increasing website traffic and creating brand awareness. In addition, thought leadership is important, as building a trusted authority position is important for the success of content marketing. Creating a strategy that builds trust should include shared values with

the customer, interdependence, quality communication and non-opportunistic behavior (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). The content that increases trust is usually long-form either in text or video format, such as market research or reports about an industry topic, case studies, whitepapers, webinars or e-books (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

As B2B buyers value the availability of information, content marketing is a great channel to adjust to this need by offering content related to each phase of the buying decision process. Before even being in touch with a representative from the company, B2B customers tend to make 60% of the purchasing decision. Usually, most of the information used to make this decision is found online. Inbound content marketing allows a company to invest in relationships with the customers before their purchase by providing them with relevant and engaging content that either educates or entertains them. For the content to be relevant, it is important to do proper market research in which the target group and their needs are identified and defined. The content published should tackle these needs, interests, and pain points of the target audience while telling a good story at the same time. The used channels should be chosen based on the user behaviors of the target audience. (Holliman & Rowley, 2014.)

Currently, the majority of content created by B2B companies is still around the company and their services (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). However, according to a study made by Corporate Visions (2017), 80% of marketers say their content is ineffective. The majority says it is because the content is not engaging as it is focused on the company's products and services. To be able to differentiate from the competitors, the content should focus on telling the story of the company and the brand (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

For many B2B companies, the main idea behind their content strategy is to drive visitors to their website. The content tends to be related to the services and products of the company and is offered for free. In addition, social content made by the customers and users of the website is important in its collaborative aspect and helps to build and maintain customer relationships. The performance of content marketing is usually measured by web analytics, profit and sales, cost per new customer or the number of backlinks generated by the content. (Holliman & Rowley, 2014.)

According to Holliman & Rowley (2014), there are certain aspects companies wanting to explore B2B marketing should take into consideration. These include:

- Understanding that content marketing is not only about selling to the customer, but helping them through the generated content;



- Using content marketing strategically, building long-term relationships with ongoing content;
- Understanding that the objective of content marketing should be to build a trusted brand status;
- Understanding how digital content marketing can complement other marketing activities;
- Understanding that good content is valuable and useful for its user being relevant, compelling, and timely;
- Understanding that providing good content requires knowledge about the needs of customers in different stages of the buyer journey;
- Understanding the role of different kinds of content for different audiences; and
- Using metrics and measurement tools to measure the success of the content related to relationship building and customer development.

Some of the limitations of content marketing are that the results are not immediate. A content plan may take a long time to bring a return on investment. It is also quite time-consuming, so there needs to be enough human resources and enough skills to create, publish, and track the content. In addition, finding content ideas can be difficult, especially if you are not aware of what your prospects are interested in or what are their pain points. Lastly, search engines are constantly changing their search algorithms and this is why content marketing also changes rapidly. This is why to stay relevant, you need to stay on top of the latest trends and technologies. (DeMers, 2016.)

## 2.4 Marketing communications planning

Marketing communications planning is important for the marketing communications to fulfill the objectives set for it. The objectives should always reflect the company's organizational and marketing objectives, and they should be measurable so that the success of the marketing communications can be identified (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, pp. 301-303). Measurable means that there are clear key performance indicators (KPIs), such as sales growth in percentages or the number of new retailers found. Only when the objectives are measurable, can we see if they will be met. When defining the objectives, it is also important to think of the purpose of the communication (McDonald & Wilson, 2011). There are four common tasks for communication:

- Differentiating the company from its competitors;
- Reinforcing the brand;
- Informing the customers of the brand's existence;
- Persuading the customers to act in a certain way.

Each of these tasks requires different types of channels. For example, informing customers about a brand's existence or its differences compared to another brand is most effective when done through advertising.

The target audience is defined at the same time as the marketing communications objectives (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, pp. 301-303). The objectives can only be set when the target audience has been defined, as these two factors are dependent on each other. In B2B marketing it is important to remember that the target audience includes not only the members of the DMU but also the influencers. In addition to defining who is the target audience, it is important to think what do they already know about the company or product and the competition, as well as what kind of people they are and what are their preferences and behaviors like (McDonald & Wilson, 2011, p. 270). Figure 3 shows the flow of the marketing communications planning, which is the main methodology used in this thesis.

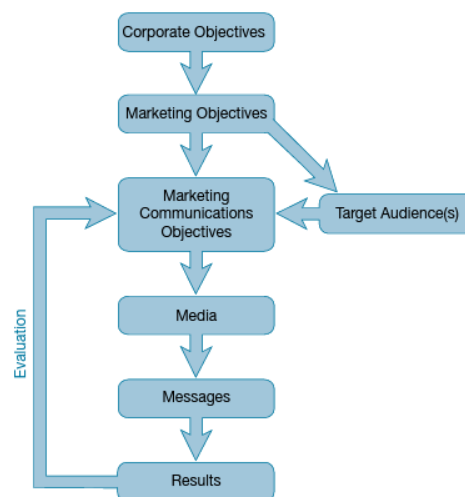


Figure 3: Marketing Communications Planning (Source: Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013)

Based on the target audience, the next step in marketing communications planning is to define the channels used. These depend completely on where the target audience tends to be. However, another important aspect to take into consideration is the cost-

effectiveness of the channels (McDonald & Wilson, 2011, p. 270). Usually, B2B marketing is done through web-based channels, business or trade publications, exhibitions, brochures or mailings. The channels used by competitors may have an effect on the decision, as heavy advertising in a certain channel may need to be met. In addition, the nature of the product should be taken into consideration when choosing the channels, as some products can be easily explained in words while others require the possibility to test them out. Following the channels, the messages used in the communication need to be defined. B2B marketing communications tend to be more fact-based, however, the way the facts are communicated should be interesting to grab the attention of the target audience. (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013.)

In addition to the channel and media, the marketer should also define what are the most suitable times for the marketing activities to take place and how much money is available to execute the campaign (McDonald & Wilson, 2011, p. 270).

After the marketing communications plan has been made, it is also important to plan how the results will be measured (Gagnon, 2016). To increase the response rate, a marketer should think beforehand firstly, how the target audience will contact the company or respond to the marketing communications activities, and secondly, how can they be motivated to respond. One way to motivate the target audience is to provide them with an added benefit, such as a promotional offer.

When the marketing campaign has been launched, it is time to measure the results. If the objectives set are measurable and the measurement plan has been created, it will be easy to compare the results of the campaign with the set objectives and criteria (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, pp. 301-303). If the results are not measuring up with the objectives, the campaign should be evaluated, and possibly change the channels, audience, messages, or other factors adapted according to the results. Especially when a company is dealing with a new market or new product launch, the results may fall below initial expectations (Gagnon, 2016). If this is taken into consideration early on, the marketer can prepare for this possible outcome, and react quickly to the results. In this scenario, the marketer should identify the underlying marketing causes, revise and improve the campaign, and relaunch it as soon as possible.

As the campaign starts generating results, these leads should be nurtured to move quickly through the customer decision-making process (Gagnon, 2016). The leads should be directly sent ongoing content that relates to their stage of the customer

journey. This content should provide answers to any doubts they might be having. The content can be sent for example in the form of a periodic newsletter.

Figure 4 shows what kind of forces are needed to move the customer through the different stages of the customer journey and barriers to communication in each stage. In an integrated marketing communications plan, the messages should vary both by channel used and by the stage of the customer journey that the customer is in (McDonald & Wilson, 2011, pp. 265-267). In the B2B context, identifying the stage can be a bit more difficult, as members of the DMU might be in different stages.

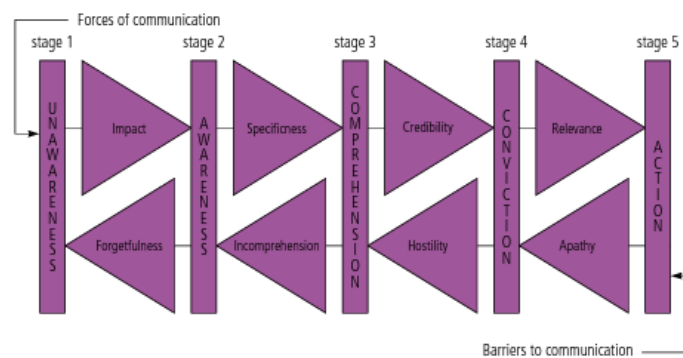


Figure 4: Brand loyalty ladder: the five stages of communication (Source: McDonald & Wilson, 2011)

## 2.5 Trade show marketing

Trade shows are a traditional way of B2B marketing in which a company can improve its brand positioning compared to competitors, learn about the latest trends in the industry, and build or strengthen networks. Many times trade shows are events where industry professionals gather once or twice a year, and attendance has almost become obligatory for the industry leaders (Vitale, et al., 2011). However, trade shows are also great avenues for smaller companies that are looking to enter a new market (Evers & Knight, 2008). By attending trade shows, smaller companies will get visibility and awareness of their brand name and have the chance to network with possible partners in the new market.

Lately, attending trade shows has also received a lot of criticism, mainly for their high cost and sometimes low conversion rate of immediate leads (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, p. 352). In general, there is a lot of discussion between the primary goal of trade show marketing; whether it is to do immediate sales or focus more on public relations and

increasing brand awareness. Most companies tend to think of sales and lead generation as the primary function of trade fairs, however, some think it is more important to attend a fair in order to show that the company is at the top of the industry.

However, there are some industries that are heavily dependent on trade shows. For example, the aviation industry allows buyers to access trade shows for free, as well as taking care of other costs for them, because trade shows give companies a chance to create publicity over closing a deal, which speeds up the process that could have normally taken months or even years (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, pp. 367-368). This being said, trade shows are critical to industries with high-value products or products that are quite large or complex. Trade shows allow buyers and suppliers to make new contacts and strengthen already existing relationships.

In total, 13 primary reasons for attending trade shows have been identified. More than half of these (seven out of 13) were directly related to sales (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013). Usually, sales activities are also ranked the highest when thinking of reasons to attend trade shows. Other motives are for example gathering information about new products, technologies, and competitors, as well as presenting a new product to a certain target group (Evers & Knight, 2008). As for visitors, they are mainly interested to learn about market access, new products, trends in the industry, and potential suppliers (Godar & O'Connor, 2001). Usually, visitors are not direct buyers, but people who are influencers in the purchasing decisions. Especially when dealing with B2B companies, these influencers might have a crucial impact on whether a company will or will not choose to buy a certain product. To get the best benefit out of trade shows, it is important to understand what the visitors' needs and expectations are (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013). According to their situation in the customer decision-making process, the right people should be in the stands to take care of their questions and doubts. Most commonly the visitors are in the information search phase, and thus, people who are able to answer questions about the products should be available at the stand.

International networks are of extreme importance when it comes to internationalization. They can help a company grow their reach rapidly and with better success than companies who do not have a network in the target country (Evers & Knight, 2008). Trade shows have an important role in B2B marketing, especially when thinking about internationalization. Attendance at a trade show may allow meeting a large number of potential partners and growing the relationships with them in a short time, which would otherwise have been extremely difficult due to geographical location. This is one of the

main advantages of taking part in trade shows. People from many different levels take part in the events, so it is a great opportunity to grow one's network. Even if the attendance of the targeted buyers would be low, fair attendees will consist of people who have an influence on the final buying decision. Many times these are for example technical people, who come to the trade shows to see new products, and who have influence in the buying decisions of a company. In addition, trade shows are usually held in neutral territory, which means that it is easier to nurture and develop these relationships as both parties are more relaxed. This is a major benefit compared to normal sales situations. (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, pp. 352-357.)

Usually, the majority of visitors of trade shows are not buyers, and hence, the main objective of attending a trade show should not be direct sales. However, this might vary depending on the trade show. For example, 80% of the visitors to UK's Springfair have purchasing ability (ASP, 2015). According to a study made by Evers & Knight (2008), small and medium-sized companies find an important part of trade show attendance to be network building. The companies are benefited not only by direct contacts but with referrals from the network built in these trade shows. The study also showed that SMEs consider trade shows an important alley for foreign market selection and entry. The main reason for this is the ability to identify foreign exchange partners in the trade shows that can assist with their market knowledge and resources of the target market. Trade shows are seen as one of the best ways to learn about foreign products and markets, and as a critical method for international market entry especially for start-ups and other SMEs. Building international networks in trade shows allow these companies to enter new markets faster and more efficiently as they can connect with different professionals and government agencies. Due to the information and knowledge received from these business and social ties, SMEs can skip the long processes of experiential learning in foreign markets. (Evers & Knight, 2008). This is why trade shows should be seen as a place to develop long-term partnerships that will provide sales later on.

Not planning properly for the trade shows is one of the key mistakes a company might make. Companies should create a plan to cater to the needs and expectations of the visitors. Properly planning for a trade show may take as long as six months, considering the pre-preparation as well as follow up after the event. Seven steps for trade show preparation can be identified. Firstly, measurable, achievable and realistic objectives should be defined. After the objectives are clear, the exhibitions to attend should be chosen, taking into consideration the visitor profiles, the cost, the timing, competitive

level, and the prestige level of the trade shows. Third, the stand staff should be chosen according to the objectives and the visitor profile. Next, the support promotions need to be planned. These can be for example social media, direct mail to visitors, or press releases. The marketing department can also help in the fifth step, which is planning how the stand itself will look like. It should be eye-catching, but information providing at the same time. Another important part is to have a space where conversations with visitors can be held in peace. However, it is not only important to plan the content and promotion before and during the event but also plan ahead the follow-up activities. This is where many companies fail, as without follow up, the trade show will most likely not bring any benefit. Lastly, the logistics of the event day should be planned out to make sure that all the materials and equipment are available, and that the staff are briefed and have transportation and accommodation. After the event and follow up has been done, it is important to evaluate the activities for future reference. (Zimmerman & Blythe, 2013, pp. 360-361.)

Usually, trade show attendance takes a big proportion of the B2B marketing budget, 39% on average (Thimmesch, 2013). The cost per lead may also be high and direct return on investment is difficult to calculate, as the results come usually later on. However, by sticking to some best case practices, trade show marketing can bring great results, especially as trade shows give the chance to meet clients face-to-face. Other unique benefits of trade shows are the ability to see many prospects and customers as well as suppliers and resellers at the same time. In addition, the quality of the leads from trade shows is one of the highest compared to other marketing or sales activities (Johnson, n.d.).

There are ways to take out more from the trade show than by just exhibiting. For example, prior to the trade show a company can try to get product coverage in the show guide. In addition, by scheduling appointments with key prospects in advance, you will be sure to have the chance to talk to the right people. In addition to scheduling appointments with customers, appointments with editors may allow for extra PR coverage. It is also important that the person managing the stand is from the marketing department, as they will try to get as many leads as possible. These leads should then be followed up with during the following days after the trade show. (Johnson, n.d.)

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The research in the current thesis has been done in a qualitative manner and the main research approach used was the inductive approach. The reasoning was based on observations made from the writer's own experience working with B2B marketing for the past two years as well as the interviews conducted. This approach was chosen to find patterns that answer the research questions. With the inductive approach, patterns and relationships from the interviews could be observed in order to come to conclusions that could be used in the creation of the marketing communications plan. In an inductive approach, there is no clearly defined theoretical framework in the beginning (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 490). The researcher starts by gathering data and observations around the research topic (John Dudovskiy, 2017). After the data has been collected, the researcher looks for patterns in the observations and tries to come up with a theory to explain them. Only when finishing the research the researcher comes to conclusions about the theoretical framework. The inductive method is used especially in qualitative research, as is the case in the current thesis.

Data collection was done through interviews and as a desktop research using secondary data collected online. To have a better understanding of the B2B marketing environment in the United Kingdom and the current marketing state of Plantui, three interviews were conducted. Due to the time limit of conducting this thesis, and the fact that recurring themes were found in the two interviews related to B2B marketing in the UK, the number of interviews was limited to three. The respondents were chosen due to their professional positions and geographical location. In addition to these three, an informal, unstructured interview about the state of Plantui in the United Kingdom was conducted in May 2017 with the marketing manager and the sales manager of Plantui.

Interviews were chosen as the data-collection method as they allowed to go more into detail. According to Saunders, et al. (2009, p. 318), interviews are used to "gather valid and reliable data that is relevant to your research question(s) and objectives". Interviews gave good insights into what marketing professionals in the UK are doing in order to answer the research questions. As benchmarking the target market's customs is important, this data could not have been collected sufficiently only through a survey. Interviews were needed to properly understand what is being done to increase brand awareness in the United Kingdom, as the questions asked were open-ended.



The interviews conducted were semi-structured interviews. General questions were created in advance for both the current state interview and the UK B2B marketing environment interviews. Each interview had some different questions targeted to the specific interviewee and their role, even though the UK B2B questions were mostly the same. As the interviews were semi-structured, the interviews were more like conversations with the order of the questions changing according to the flow of the conversation (Saunders, et al., 2009). The interviews were conducted in December 2017 through video conferences due to the distant locations of the interviewees and recorded by taking notes. Most of the questions used were open, but in some cases, probing questions were used to understand the reasons behind events or previous answers. A few specific questions were also asked to obtain specific information. In the end, the results were analyzed by summarizing the meanings. The answers related to B2B marketing were put in a spreadsheet and compared to each other.

Semi-structured interviews have been criticized for having data quality issues. These can be related for example to reliability, bias, or validity and generalizability (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 326). Bias can be behind the lack of reliability, and it comes in many forms such as interviewer bias or response bias. Interviewer bias can show in the comments, tone, or non-verbal behavior of the interviewer. On the other hand, perceptions of the interviewer or perceived interviewer bias can cause response bias. To ensure the reliability of the interviews, the questions were kept very general and open-ended. This enabled that the interviewees were not guided towards any specific direction. Usually, the interviewer tried to connect the answers that the respondent had given to present the next question. Comments by the interviewer were kept to the minimum to avoid interviewer bias. In addition, the interviewer has personal connections to two out of the three interviewees, and the third respondent was also a second-degree contact, which means there is little fear of the interviewees not trusting the interviewer.

Generalizing the answers is also one of the limitations of semi-structured interviews. In particular, the interviewer can mold the answer of the respondent to bring out the desired outcome by interpreting the answer in a different way as the interviewee intended (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 327). This was attempted to avoid by formulating the questions in different ways and clarified if needed. Notes were written word-to-word. As there is trust between the interviewees and the interviewer, the respondents had no problem asking for clarification if it was needed.

One of the limitations of the interviews done in the current thesis is that firstly, there were only three conducted, and secondly, the interviewees were of different industries than Plantui. However, these people were chosen for the interviews as the data collected was related to B2B marketing and the interviewed people work in B2B marketing. However, one of the interviewees works with technology, so they do not market their own product, such a Plantui. The two other marketing people had experience with marketing Plantui products as well as other products.

Interviews done with purchasers from the key retailers regarding their social media usage were considered, but due to the depth and length of this thesis, this was not possible. In addition, taking into consideration the time restraint of the research process and the lack of contacts within the purchasers, the research process would have needed to be prolonged by at least a few weeks if interviews with the purchasers would have been conducted. For the purpose of this thesis, it was important to have a proper understanding of the B2B marketing environment in the United Kingdom, for which reason the decision to interview people working in marketing rather than purchasers was made.

## 4 B2B MARKETING PLAN FOR PLANTUI

This chapter will go deeper into the creation of the B2B marketing plan for the commissioner company. Firstly, there will be a market analysis done about the United Kingdom market in part 4.1. Part 4.2 will go into defining the target audience for the marketing campaign. After this, the results of the interviews conducted will be analyzed. The last part will explain the marketing communications plan. Firstly, the content plan for online digital marketing will be explained, after which trade show attendance is looked at more closely.

### 4.1 Market analysis

This part will look closer at the United Kingdom market. This will be done using the PESTLE -format, that looks at the political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal, and ecological aspects of the country. This is important to know as the market is new and quite unknown for the company. After the PESTLE analysis, I will look at different competitors, mainly from their marketing activities perspective, as most of them are already known to the commissioner company.

#### 4.1.1 PESTLE analysis

The political environment of the United Kingdom is characterized by the fact that the country is a parliamentary constitutional monarchy constituting of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The head of the state is Queen Elizabeth II. The prime minister Theresa May is the head of the two-house government consisting of an elected House of Commons and an appointed House of Lords. In 2016 the Britons voted to leave the European Union in a referendum (BBC News, 2017). This is commonly referred to as Brexit.

Brexit has also affected the economic environment of the United Kingdom. Although economic growth stayed strong in 2016, it is expected to weaken in 2017 and 2018 due to decreased business investments and slower growth in private consumption (European Commission, 2017). In the last years, the economy has grown mainly due to domestic demand and employment, although net exports have been weak and productivity stayed

still. Inflation has also grown since the referendum in summer 2016. According to a recent study, Brexit is already costing the average person about £404 a year and the growth of real wages has decreased (Sipilä, 2017). This means that the standard of living has decreased due to Brexit. This may have an effect on the buying power of the Britons. However, the United Kingdom is still a strong economy and is a part of the G8 countries (Globalis, 2015). Even though the UK was the first industrialized country in the world, the economy is currently mainly based on service industries (BBC News, 2017). The financial industry in London is one of the main contributors. The economic crisis that hit Europe in 2008 has also affected the United Kingdom and resulted in a high public debt. In consequence, there have been great cuts in welfare, government services, and the military.

In 2013 the United Kingdom was Finland's 6th most important export country and 8th most important import country. The share of Finland's export was 5.2% and import 3.2%. The export has decreased due to the smaller demand for mobile phones and paper products. On the import side, the number of imported cars and raw oil has decreased. Finnish forest industry products have a strong position in the British market. In 2008 Finland was the 3rd most important importer of these products. (Suomen suurlähetystö, Lontoo, 2014.)

Socioculturally the United Kingdom is very diverse. Not only does it consist of four countries, but a lot of people have migrated there from the old colonies as well as other parts of Europe. The differences in ethnicities have recently led to issues related to multiculturalism, immigration, and national identity (BBC News, 2017). The biggest age group is 25-54 years (40.74%) followed by the elderly (65 years and over) with 17.9% (IndexMundi, 2017). The main religion is Christian, with 59.5% belonging to this faith. Fear of terrorism and Islamist radicalism is also a concern as in other parts of Europe. In addition, the cuts made in welfare have brought up concerns related to social equality.

The United Kingdom was the first industrialized country in the world (Advameg, Inc., 2017). This means that it has a long tradition in technology. For example, the steam engine and the spinning jenny were invented in the UK. Nowadays, they are at the forefront of research in radio astronomy, laser holography, and superconductivity. Traditionally, technology has been highly invested in the United Kingdom and since 2011 the United Kingdom has been a leader in technological investments in Europe (The Telegraph, 2017). Due to these investments, the technology sector has grown to be a

major contributor to the British economy. However, professionals of the industry are afraid that Brexit will slow down the growth due to talent shortage.

From the legal side, entering the United Kingdom has its challenges. Each country has different laws, jurisdiction, and practices. On the other hand, creating contracts and agreements is quite complex as all small details are taken into consideration (FinPro, 2010). However, for the time being, being part of the EU makes things easier, but this is bound to change in the near future due to Brexit, and the future is quite uncertain in this matter. The United Kingdom is also a member of the OECD, which means it needs to abide by their regulations (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017).

Lastly, when looking at the United Kingdom from the ecological view, it can be stated that due to the early industrialization the United Kingdom has severe environmental problems (Globalis, 2015). Especially in the larger cities, the quality of the air is bad and the water is polluted. However, there is a lot of concern for environmental issues and due to measurements taken by the government, the situation is getting better. The pollution, agriculture, and overpopulation of the island has also affected the landscape (Smith, 2015). In addition, the level of the sea water is rising due to global warming. Due to all of this, environmental organizations are gaining popularity and the government has set high penalties for environmental offences. The government also encourages companies to use green technologies by offering financial incentives.

In conclusion, to answer the research question of what kind of market the United Kingdom is for Plantui, it seems to be favorable despite the uncertainty that Brexit brings.

#### 4.1.2 Competitor analysis

After conducting a competitor analysis, I have not found any UK-based company offering similar products. However, there are other European based companies that offer smart gardening devices usually through their own online stores. At least one competitor is also available in the same department store where Plantui is also already sold (Hofmann & Kolomy, 2017).

When looking at the main competitors' online marketing activities, we can identify a clear trend. Most of their content strategy is targeted towards the B2C market and the purpose is to gain direct sales through e-commerce. The websites all have an online store. Some

companies have opted to have the sole function of the site to be e-commerce. The majority of the competitors under inspection also had a blog in which they shared product information and recipes. One of the closest competitors had many clear calls to actions on their website, such as forms for influence marketers as well as retailers to contact them directly and an option to sign up for a newsletter.

Social media marketing in the industry is dominated by Facebook. The closest competitors post on Facebook daily, sharing product information, pictures from trade fairs, blog posts, giveaways or promotions, as well as share posts or articles telling about their corporate culture. Facebook is also used to engage with customers by asking for their opinions and answering questions.

Twitter is another platform that was used commonly. The main purpose of Twitter seemed to be customer engagement, and posts by customers were retweeted as well as answered. The companies also shared similar posts as on Facebook, mainly about their products, trade fair attendance, and sharing blog posts or articles about the benefits of hydroponic gardening, in other words, gardening without soil.

YouTube was used by the inspected companies to share product information, TV commercials, and educational videos related to hydroponic gardening. Most of the competitors also use Instagram to share product pictures, but this medium is not used so often.

LinkedIn, the leader in B2B marketing is very rarely used by the competitors. The majority has a company page there but does not post on it or use the platform to engage with customers. The competitors under inspection had little to none activity on LinkedIn.

The full competitor analysis has been provided to the company.

#### 4.1.3 Retailers in the United Kingdom

The UK customer prefers to shop online (see part 4.2), and the United Kingdom is the world's leader in e-commerce sales as the percentage of total retail sales (ASP, 2015). However, this means that UK retailers are constantly looking for new products as this is the most successful way to attract customers. There are various retailers and department stores in the United Kingdom. Four retailers that have been chosen for their prestige and size are presented in Appendix 1. For Plantui, the most suitable retailers to focus on at

this point would be John Lewis and Selfridges & Co due to their size, prestige, and multiple locations around the United Kingdom.

#### 4.2 Target audience

The target group as set by the commissioner company are retailers in the United Kingdom. There are various sellers specialized in hydroponics in the United Kingdom. However, most of these cater to the agriculture industry, and not for home gardeners. This is why I do not believe, that these retailers would be a suitable target group for the Plantui products. Instead, I believe focusing on high-end department stores that sell luxury products will be the right place for Plantui.

Within these retailers, the main target audience for the marketing plan is purchasers. As smart gardens are a quite new concept, the targeted purchasers should be people who would use the product themselves. That way they could imagine themselves using it and want to share the experience with others. However, as the marketing plan in question is made for the B2B audience, it is not only the purchasers who make the purchasing decisions of new products. Other influencers such as the department heads for consumer electronics and design items, who have the expertise and knowledge of the industry, should also be aware of the products.

In general, Plantui has five different target customer groups. Urban gardeners, design lovers, food fanatics, families with children, and health-conscious customers (Plantui, 2015). Although millennials and Generation X prefer to shop online, when it comes to household appliances and homeware, about 60% of consumers prefer to shop in-store (PwC, 2017). However, when looking at specifically the United Kingdom, only 25% of consumers prefer to research their homeware purchases in-store and 52% of the Britons prefer to buy household appliances online. This means that while in-store visibility is still important especially for branding, Plantui should guarantee that their products are available in the retailers' online stores. The UK consumers value mobile-friendly online stores as well as fast delivery times (Euromonitor International, 2017).

### 4.3 Interview results and analysis

In total three interviews were conducted to understand the current state of marketing in Plantui as well as the B2B marketing customs in the United Kingdom. The results of the interviews will be analyzed in the following subchapters and used to create the marketing plan for Plantui.

#### 4.3.1 Interview about current state

To understand the current state of Plantui's marketing, an interview was done with Silke Hofmann, who was the marketing responsible at Plantui. In total 14 questions, which can be seen in Appendix 5, were asked related to the current marketing activities.

The first two questions were related to the marketing channels and target audience. Currently, Plantui's marketing is mainly targeted towards the B2C market. The main marketing channels are Facebook, Instagram, and the company website. They have also tried influencers, LinkedIn for a short period, and trade fairs. The main target audience is gardening enthusiasts who want to continue gardening during the winter and people who do not know how to garden but want to grow their own fresh herbs.

Next, related more to the research questions, Hofmann was asked about the differences of marketing activities in different countries, and of current B2B marketing activities. Currently, there is no difference between the marketing in different countries, except if there is a distributor, in which case the distributor will take care of the marketing. The only things that have so far been done regarding B2B marketing are trade shows and the general marketing through social media. This leaves very open hands for the current marketing plan creation. As for trade shows, the main benefits have been receiving feedback from customers and being discovered by people who otherwise would not have heard about the company.

Lastly, Hofmann was asked more specific questions related to the marketing activities and processes in Plantui. Usually, marketing is planned 3-4 weeks in advance and a social media calendar is updated weekly. Results are measured using the social media analytics, hard sales, and Google Analytics. The blog's goal has been to have weekly posts and the main purpose is to engage with current customers, support the customer experience, do branding and give the company a face. No SEO has been used on the



website or the blog posts. The results from marketing have mainly been due to promotions. The main challenges of the marketing are explaining the value that the price will bring, educating people about a whole new concept, finding a middle line with different types of target audiences, and defining up-to-date customer personas.

The interview with Hofmann gave a good insight into the challenges of the marketing at Plantui, but also to the available resources and the basis that is already there. The interview also helped to identify that almost nothing has been done regarding B2B marketing, which allows the plan created in the current thesis to start from a free canvas. In addition, based on the results of the interview, it can be observed that there is a general lack of time and/or knowledge, such as with the target audience and in the implementation of SEO.

#### 4.3.2 Interviews about B2B marketing in the United Kingdom

Two interviews were conducted related to the B2B marketing environment and customs in the UK. Both interviewees work for Finnish companies in the United Kingdom. Both of them also work in the area of B2B marketing, Saija Mahon in a marketing agency and Marianne Cacho Pires in a technology company.

Firstly, a question about the most used B2B marketing channels was asked. Both agreed that LinkedIn is one of the most important channels. In addition, Pires mentioned emails and Mahon said her customers get the most leads through SEO and paid advertisements on Google and LinkedIn. Facebook is used for visibility and brand awareness, but it does not bring B2B leads. This is also where many of the competitors were doing their brand building, so it is important to have a presence on Facebook.

The following two questions related to the social media usage of a UK professional and more closely to the usage of LinkedIn. Facebook and Instagram are the most used channels, followed by LinkedIn. Both agreed that LinkedIn has a strong position in the UK. The amount of contacts you have there is important. People use LinkedIn to blog and show the image of a thought leader, as well as to approach people through private messages. Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) also underlined the importance of thought leadership, especially when thinking about trust building in the B2B environment.

Next, the respondents were asked about the type of content that works the best for the UK audience. Here there was a bit of discrepancy with the answers. According to Pires,

the most successful content is video and blogs posted on personal LinkedIn profiles. The themes can be almost about anything in life, and people comment a lot on these posts. On the other hand, Mahon underlined the importance of useful articles that can give tips for everyday life, spiced up with some humor. In addition, she mentioned that communicating the ethics and company vision and mission are becoming almost more important than the product itself to the UK consumers.

From the marketing agency perspective, these marketing activities are usually measured through Google analytics and comparing to how the competitors are doing, whereas Pires adds the sales perspective of the number of qualified leads and conversion rates.

When asked about how brand awareness is increased in the United Kingdom, the same SEO and Google marketing are mentioned. IMC is also important, and common non-digital marketing channels are for example buses and bus stops. As mentioned by Copley (2013), IMC helps customers remember the brand better. Finnish companies are seen as Nordic companies, and Nordic products have a good reputation in the UK, especially as ethical, clean, and good quality products.

A common trend related to personal connections could be observed. Both respondents graded personal connections to be extremely important in the UK, with 7.5/10 and 8/10 as the grades given. This is also supported by the research of Zimmerman & Blythe (2013), who say developing and maintaining relationships is crucial in the B2B environment. According to the interviewees, contacts are very important and the fact of who you know is more important than in many other countries. Trust and personal connections even affect what people buy and how they perceive products. Most long-term clients are also due to personal contacts. Businesses try to engage with business customers for example in different events, conferences and partnership meetings as well as by keeping their social media, websites, and professional profiles up to date. Trade shows still hold an important role in the UK, mainly for networking purposes, but come at a high cost.

Lastly, as Mahon has worked with Plantui's marketing in the United Kingdom before, a series of questions about the past activities were asked. The main challenges have been related to the lack of market knowledge, especially when thinking about the requirements in the United Kingdom. Mahon highlighted the importance of having a native speaker that knows not only the language but local culture creating the marketing content. Brands in the UK are also more advanced in social media than many Finnish companies, which

brings a challenge. Previously, SEO and Google campaigns have been done in the UK with Plantui. The challenge is to communicate the unique selling point to the customers, especially why they should pay a higher price for the product. Although the importance of e-commerce is rising in the UK, Mahon says that for a product such as Plantui's smart garden, it is important that people can see it in a showroom or a retailer as it is not an impulsive purchase.

Based on these interviews, it can be observed that personal connections and LinkedIn hold important roles when it comes to B2B marketing in the United Kingdom. Creating not only the professional brand, but a personal brand as a salesperson is important, and the concept of thought leadership can help in building trust with possible clients or partners. The uniqueness of the traditional British culture needs to be taken into consideration by anyone who wants to enter the market be it in the language used in the content, requirements, or currency in the online store.

#### 4.4 Marketing plan

Taking the conducted interviews into consideration, to answer the main research question, "What kind of marketing activities should Plantui do in order to attract retailers in the United Kingdom?", I suggest an integrated marketing communications plan consisting of online content marketing and trade shows to enter the UK market. The key is to have a right balance of own content, paid content, and earned content, meaning shares, reposts, and mentions on social media. The goal is to get the product to the attention of the purchasers and influencers of the retailers, but also to the attention of the consumers. Due to the size of the commissioner company, it needs a very basic, concrete, and manageable marketing plan. The plan was created so that it can be applied also to other markets in the future. In this section, I will explain the main parts of creating the marketing plan, which will be provided fully to the commissioner.

According to the marketing communications planning model presented in part 2.4, the first thing is to define the objectives of the marketing campaign. As the commissioner's business objective is to expand to the United Kingdom, the marketing communications objectives follow this. The objective of the campaign is to have the purchasers of major retailers recognize the brand when they are reached out to by the sales team. This is because content marketing should create a favorable climate for personal sales, as well as generate direct leads. Based on the research done on the major retailers in the United

Kingdom, I would say the efforts should be put on John Lewis, as they operate throughout the country, and secondly on Selfridges & Co. However, due to the buying habits of the UK market, it is extremely important that the product will also be available in the online stores of these retailers. As the product is already sold in Harrod's, it is important to get the product available in the Harrod's online store as well.

The media used will be trade shows and online social media, as these are the places where the target group, the purchasers and influencers, usually spend their time. For the content plan, the primary channels will be LinkedIn and the company website, as we are trying to target B2B decision makers and these mediums help to position the brand in front of the right people. These channels are also easy to manage with a lower amount of human resources and according to the interviewees are highly used in the UK. Salespeople usually already use LinkedIn, so some of the branding can be done as a part of their daily activities, such as writing their own posts and publishing them on LinkedIn to create thought leadership. According to Pires (2017) and Mahon (2017), this is a common way to engage with possible customers on LinkedIn. As for trade shows, these are important as personal connections have such a big influence in the United Kingdom.

The messages used in the campaign need to portray the product and its unique value proposition, but as the target is B2B purchasers, the message should also portray the company as a trustworthy partner that acts in a sustainable manner.

The campaign should be measured by measuring the impressions, clicks, social actions, new followers gained, and the engagement rate of the social media posts and ads as well as mentions by on other social media profiles or articles. In particular to track the objectives, the two most important analytics are the new followers and visitors gained from the United Kingdom. As for trade shows, the key performance indicators should be new leads or contacts received, and, even though the main goal of attending trade shows should not be new sales, for obvious reasons also new sales received at the event or due to the trade show activities, should be measured.

#### 4.4.1 Content plan

As trust is one of the key factors in B2B marketing, the content marketing should focus on building brand visibility and presenting this brand as a trustworthy partner. That is why

all the content should focus on communicating the company's vision and bringing out the value proposition of the product. According to an interview done with Silke Hofmann (2017), who has been in charge of the marketing activities at Plantui, one of the main challenges of the marketing is to educate people about a whole new concept, as smart gardens are not very common yet. This is why the content marketing also needs to explain the basics of the product so that the purchasers can understand what it is about and imagine themselves growing herbs in a Plantui smart garden.

The main part of the content plan is the company website. This is because the majority of B2B buyers search online before having any contact with the company, so the website should be the main source of information. Plantui's website already has a lot of information about the company, its history, and the people behind it and has been recently updated in November 2017. This is good for building trust. The website also has a separate page for retailers, that not only tells the added benefit the retailers will have, but also give them the chance to request for more information. As emails are a common method in B2B marketing in the UK, a good option for lead generation is to also include a B2B newsletter sign up, so indecisive purchasers can receive more information, and the leads can be nurtured with proper content at the right time. This content will only be needed to create once, so it will save both time and human resources while providing the prospects with the needed information to move them through the decision-making process.

Even though the website has all necessary information, the key is to drive traffic to it. According to Hofmann (2017), the Plantui website has not been properly search engine optimized. This means the website needs to be search engine optimized by using the right keywords to drive traffic to the website. In addition, for the SEO strategy to work properly, the content needs to be constantly updated. This is why the blog is an important part of the content strategy. The blog also enables possible purchasers to find more information about the company and the product's value proposition. The blogs written should be around topics related to the benefits of the smart gardening, recipes using the cultivated herbs, news of the company and in general telling the story of the company. According to HubSpot, B2B companies that post 11 or more blogs a month have three times more traffic than those blogging 0-1 times a month and 47% of buyers view 3-5 pieces of content before engaging with a sales representative (HubSpot, 2017). This is why it the blogs should be shared on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, and the LinkedIn company page. Currently the main purpose of the Plantui blog has been to

engage with the current customers and give the company a face by sharing company updates, however, the main goal should be to drive traffic to the website. This is why the blog should be updated more often. The blogs need to be also search engine optimized with keywords and categories that will help the reader to navigate within similar topics in the blog.

The LinkedIn company page is an important part of the content strategy. So far Plantui has not taken advantage of the LinkedIn page, as the marketing activities have mainly been B2C focused (Hofmann, 2017). The company page should be kept up to date with the latest information, and the header image should be changed about every 6 months. The LinkedIn company page can be used to share company news and blogs. According to LinkedIn (2017), a prospect engages with 10 pieces of content before making a purchase decision. This is why there needs to be constant content published on the company page. In addition, LinkedIn suggests that for every native post made by the company itself, there should be four posts shared from another source. They also suggest to post 3-4 times a day and to engage and respond to followers' comments. However, with the limited human resources available, one post during the weekdays should be enough to start with.

Moreover, the company page is not the only way in which LinkedIn can be used for lead generation. Paid ads on LinkedIn can be targeted directly to the purchasers of certain department stores to boost visibility within the desired target group. The LinkedIn ads should include ads to grow brand awareness and show the unique value proposition of the product, as well as encouraging to become a Plantui distributor. Ads are important especially before a trade show, as the purchaser will be more likely to recognize the company in the trade show after seeing an ad, even if they would not have paid attention or interacted with the ad. In addition, LinkedIn currently puts emphasis on conversations, which means these are shown more on the feeds of people. Joining industry groups and taking part in conversations happening in these groups or with people from the industry, are a good way to increase brand recognition, website traffic, and trust within the industry.

Facebook and Twitter are mainly used for the B2C market, but this does not take away their importance as a brand awareness building tool. They have a significant impact on the SEO results, and that's why they should also be updated frequently. In addition, consumer engagement is important in these channels. Prospective purchasers might go and look at how a company communicates with their customers on social media, so it is

important also for the B2B side. Especially on Twitter, many brands communicate with their customers and this also has an effect on how the brand is portrayed and seen. These channels can be used to share blogs or company news as well.

YouTube and Instagram do not have such a big influence on the B2B market, but they can be used to share product information. YouTube might be an important channel when purchasers are researching the ease of use of the products to see if they will fit in their product portfolio. On the other hand, photos on Instagram also have a great influence on how the brand is seen, and these pictures can even be used on news articles.

To nurture leads they should receive customized content based on the phase of the decision-making process the leads are in. This content will help them move through the decision-making process and make a decision faster. The content used to nurture the leads can be done either in blog format, directly in the newsletter, or the blog content can be sent in the personalized newsletter. The personalized newsletter is not sent in bulk, but each lead will get a newsletter depending on their perceived stage in the buying decision process. The content plan created for the commissioner (Appendix 4) shows various possible topic ideas that portray different forces needed to move from one stage to another, as explained by in part 2.4's brand loyalty ladder. A content plan related to the customer decision-making process of buyers has been provided to the company.

In addition, when new retailers have agreed to add Plantui's products to their product portfolio, they will need marketing support. Firstly, setting up the display in the stores in the beginning needs to be supported by Plantui. This will be checked up upon seasonally with new updates from the company, whether to the products or the display in itself. Lastly, Plantui's marketing efforts should support the retailer sales by driving traffic to the stores. Not only should there be a mention on the website, but every once in a while there should be a mention of the availability in these retailers' locations, for example, when seasonal updates have been done with the retailer.

The plan of the suggested marketing activities can be seen in Appendix 3.

#### 4.4.2 Trade shows

The main objectives for Plantui to take part in trade shows is to create a network in the United Kingdom to help them in the market entry, but also to establish their brand in the eyes of the consumers. In addition, direct sales with smaller retailers can be made

directly at the trade shows. Personal connections are very important in B2B marketing, and trade shows are a good place to create these connections.

Before attending a trade show, meetings should be booked in advance with key prospects. This will make sure that there will be time to meet purchasers from the target retailers. These meetings should not be used for direct sales, but for getting to know the person and introducing the product to them. In addition, the meeting should be ended with clear agreement on how to proceed.

The people hosting the stand should be preferably marketing people, as they will try to get as many leads as possible. Possible activities in the stand can include for example a demonstration of cooking with the herbs grown in Plantui, trying this food, or showing how the Plantui smart garden is set up. The trade show attendance should also be properly marketed in advance. Ads can be directly targeted to attending purchasers as a brand awareness campaign and attendance should be mentioned also on the different social media platforms. In addition, posts or ads can be made to book a meeting with Plantui in the trade show.

Based on research, I recommend five possible trade fairs to Plantui, from which they can choose the one(s) that best suits their schedule and interests. These fairs are mainly related to home décor and appliances and cater to large audiences. The suggested fairs can be seen in Appendix 2. In addition, Plantui has taken part in the IFA 2017 consumer electronics trade show in Berlin, and will also take part in the 2018 edition. As this trade show caters to the whole European market, it will also help in building brand awareness within the UK market.



## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this thesis was to find out what kind of marketing activities Plantui should undertake in order to attract retailers in the United Kingdom. Based on the research done, the marketing plan consists of content marketing and trade show marketing. The core channels used are LinkedIn, both organically and paid advertisements, the Plantui blog, the retailer landing page, and the B2B newsletter with content based on the stage of the lead in the buyer decision process.

To answer the question “What kind of content should be sent to leads in each stage of the decision-making process” a content plan that can be seen in Appendix 4 has been sent to the company. The content mainly focuses on the forces to move the lead through the different stages as presented by McDonald & Wilson (2011). These forces are impact, specificity, credibility, and relevance.

The United Kingdom environment was studied with the PESTLE analysis. Although Brexit brings uncertainty and the purchasing power of the Britons has decreased, the current environment for Plantui to enter the country is positive. Consumers are starting to care more about the environment and their health, and being a part of the European Union for the time being allows easy access.

The whole marketing plan was made with the goal of getting Plantui to be sold through the most suitable channels. Major department stores were analyzed, and John Lewis and Selfridges & Co. were chosen. The marketing plan brings more brand awareness directly to the purchasers in these companies by using techniques such as targeted LinkedIn advertisements. These purchasers will then be met in the trade shows, where they will be introduced to the product. When the sales team finally contacts them, the purchasers will already be familiar with the brand and the product.

The last research question was “What kind of digital presence will improve the brand awareness?”. The answer to this question was the integrated marketing communications plan, consisting of all the activities mentioned above.

The marketing plan created is very basic and a good starting point for the commissioner company to start with content and B2B marketing. The plan has been made with the limited resources of the company in mind, and it can be implemented later on when entering other markets as well.

The thesis was done according to the timeline set in the planning process. Especially during the literature review, I had many realizations that can benefit hugely not only in the creation of this marketing plan but also in my current job. The main challenge of the thesis was limiting the subject and especially limiting the scope of the marketing communications plan. However, by sticking to the theoretical frameworks presented, the scope of the plan could be limited and made into a compact package for the commissioner company. Even with a tight schedule, with good time management and discipline, the thesis could be finished on time.

The current thesis has been done with limited time and restrictions and thus is not perfect or whole. The main challenge was to have real data regarding the target group's social media habits. If the commissioner company would like to go further into the market research, I would suggest making a research on the current customers in the United Kingdom, so the customer personas can be created based on data. For further research, the social media habits of purchasers could be analyzed in more detail and with real data.

In conclusion, the result of this thesis is a market analysis of the UK market, an integrated marketing communications plan divided by channels and a content plan based on the stage of buying decision process that the lead is on. With these tools Plantui should be able to increase their brand awareness in the United Kingdom. The marketing plan should also support the personal sales by making a more positive climate for the sales team. This helps to bring better results and get the product to more retailers.

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## **Appendix 1: List of possible UK retailers**

### **Harrods**

Harrods is a luxury department store located in London. It is owned by Qatar Holding and it is one of the must-see locations for tourists from around the world. Harrods was opened in 1849 by Charles Henry Harrod. The store has seven floors full of luxury goods and Harrods also operates an online store with shipping and paying possibilities to many countries. Harrods sells top brands to their high-end clientele and tourists from all over the world. (Harrods, 2017.)

### **John Lewis**

John Lewis is a chain of high-end department stores in the United Kingdom. It was opened in 1864 in London and now operates 49 stores all around the United Kingdom as well as an online store. The online store offers over 280,000 products and has been ranked as one of the top online stores in the United Kingdom. John Lewis promises their customers to sell the best quality, service, and value. (John Lewis Partnership, 2017)

John Lewis requires their suppliers to take care of the well-being of their employees, communities, and environment by using sustainable materials and methods. They are also committed to meet the price of a competitor even during sales promotions which makes them highly competitive. In addition, John Lewis won the “Best In Store Experience” and “Best Homewares Retailer” awards in the 2017 Verdict Customer Satisfaction Awards and the “Retailer of the Year” in the 2017 Sunday Times Style Beauty Awards. (John Lewis Partnership, 2017.)

### **Marks & Spencer**

Marks and Spencer is an international retailer with 1433 stores around the world. It was founded as Penny Bazaar in the Leeds Kirkgate Market in 1884 and currently they have 979 stores in the United Kingdom as well as an online store. Marks and Spencer wants to make every moment special for their customers. Marks and Spencer launched a plan to address environmental, social, and ethical challenges in 2007. However, Marks and

Spencer mostly sells their own branded products, so it would not be a suitable target for Plantui. (Marks and Spencer plc, 2017.)

### **Selfridges & Co.**

Selfridges was founded in 1906 by American Harry Gordon Selfridge in London. Selfridges has been named the Best Department Store in the World three times at the Global Department Store Summit. They have 4 high-end department stores in the United Kingdom and, as their competitors, operate an online store. The stores are located in London, Birmingham, and two in Manchester. The London location is the biggest department store in the UK after Harrods. (Selfridges & Co, 2017.)



## **Appendix 2: Suggested trade shows**

*Removed for confidential reasons.*

## **Appendix 3: Marketing plan by channel**

*Removed for confidential reasons.*

## **Appendix 4: Content plan per stage of customer decision-making process**

*Removed for confidential reasons.*

## **Appendix 5: Interviews**

*Removed for confidential reasons.*