

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta
Degree Programme in International Business

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**Generating new product ideas for a social media,
Case company: Glostars**

Thesis 2018

Abstract

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Generating new product ideas for a social media, Case company: Glostars, 88 pages, 1 appendix

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The purpose of the research-based study was to generate new product ideas for Glostars based on social media industry to be implemented in near future. The study was commissioned by a social networking site called Glostars Limited (www.glostars.com). Another objective of this thesis was to understand the social media industry the prospective users' requirements, needs, and expectations.

The company overview part of the thesis focuses on the case company products and services, and earning logic. The theoretical background part of the thesis emphasizes on the concept of service, global service sector, information system, digital business, segmentation and operational challenges of digital business, social media and its types, social networking sites, new product development and its steps, and idea generation. The research methodology part of the thesis focuses on business research, nature of data and its types, primary data, secondary data, research methods, quantitative research, qualitative research, and focus groups. The theory parts were based on various literature such as books, articles and online sources. The empirical research part of the thesis was completed by using the qualitative research method. The focus group study was chosen as a data collection method to generate new product ideas. The focus group script included seven questions related to social media to find out insights. Primary data for this thesis was collected from five groups of randomly selected participants.

The results of the study show current popular features of social media. Some of these features are existent, partly existent or non-existent in the market. In addition, requirements, needs, and expectations of prospective social media end-users were identified. Current most used social media were also identified by this research result. Overall, social media's market environment and competitive situation were reviewed to come to a conclusion. Finally, a few new product ideas based on current market demands were recommended for the case company. The recommendations made as a result from this study were implemented by the case company immediately. Further study is required to find out more new product ideas for the case company to stay competitive in the market.

Keywords: social media, social network, new product development, idea generation, qualitative research, focus group analysis, service feature

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Appendix 1

Focus group discussion script

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and research gap

Social networks are online communities which help users to collaborate, communicate, and share contents. These sites are a common part of Web 2.0 technologies. In almost all social media, people are authoring their own pages and with just a click, they are publishing it on the web, which is a major change in the way people use the Internet. (Haigh 2010, p. 7.) The rapid development of this sector encouraged social networks to be categorized as social media, a photo-sharing site, a messaging application or blog for instance. Among those, photo-sharing sites are made to share photos publicly and/or privately. Nowadays, social networks are developing progressively, especially photo sharing sites (Chaffey 2016). Social networking is becoming truly popular, and the opportunity to grow as a photo sharing site is huge. A handful number of competitors and growing amount of end users makes this sector one of the fastest growing in the world (Chaffey 2016). Nevertheless, it is important to find out social network end-users' expectations and needs by doing proper market research.

The main objective of this thesis study was to generate new product ideas for the case company Glostars based on its prospective customers' suggestions. The aim was to help the case company in developing their product by supplying fresh ideas for future use. The author tried to find the current service gaps in the social-media industry. This report describes the social networking industry, digital business, social media, social network sites, and new product development for example. The theoretical background was compiled based on business books, web pages, links, articles, newspapers, and magazines, among other sources. Moreover, this thesis gives an idea of a social networking site's potential end-users and possible competitors. The result of this study provides raw ideas for new product development for Glostars, which will need more refining later by the management before development. Furthermore, this report tries to guide Glostars on a correct path towards its goals and objectives, and help to grow and expand as a healthy company. Glostars will become aware of difficulties, problems and the risks through the considerable number of service solutions and ways suggested

in this study. This process will be the start of a successful new product development plan for Glostars, where it will do idea generation based on prospective customers.

The author has been attracted to information technology and electronic business sectors from the commencement of his education. He has participated in numerous courses interconnected to business, product development, market research, research methods and so forth throughout his studies at Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. The author had worked altogether for five years in different business associated companies before moving to Finland for advanced studies. While living in Finland, he closely observed the opportunity to open a new social media site as users are constantly creating and sharing valuable content in different social media, e.g. pictures, but unfortunately, they are not getting anything more than likes, comments, and shares in return. Moreover, all social media are providing almost similar services where variation is missing, which opened the opportunity to start a new social media site. Furthermore, there was no established social media site developed in Finland where the author was studying at that time. Competitively smaller number of competitors and a vastly growing market forced the author to plan to establish a new social media site.

At the beginning of summer 2015, the author met four students from Lappeenranta University of Technology, who also wanted to start a startup in Finland. The author proposed his new social media site idea, and everyone appreciated and joined immediately as a team. Under the guidance of the Lappeenranta University of Technology Entrepreneurship Society (LUTes), they developed a brand-new photo-sharing site called Glostars, which became the LUTes Summer Launched Pad Champion. An experimental project of Glostars took place in November to December 2015 in Finland (Imatra, Lappeenranta area). The pilot project was successful, where over a thousand users joined Glostars and appreciated its product differentiation compared to other social media. Based on customer demand, the site was globally opened in January 2016. As a new photo-sharing site, it is under development constantly and currently in deep need of fresh ideas for new product development based on user demand. The author wants to complete this idea generation through this thesis study, which will deliver

knowledge about new product development for a social media site, especially a photo sharing site. The case company Glostars believes in open knowledge sharing strategy and permitted to publish their name and this research online as that will give opportunities for others to do further research.

1.2 Research problem and questions

The hypothesis is “there are not enough services offered by current social media sites where end users are satisfied with everything”, to which the author intends to find a solution through this thesis study. The author's main aim is to explore end-users’ needs and expectations, which will generate ideas to build a new product plan for Glostars.

Currently, as a new photo-sharing site, Glostars must develop its features to stay competitive in the market. Based on the purpose of this study, the main research question can be defined as:

“Which new product ideas are suitable for Glostars to develop in future?”

The main research question is supported by the following research sub-questions:

1. Which social media are currently used most?
2. What are the most significant current elements in social media?
3. What are the current service gaps in social media?
4. What changes should Glostars bring to stay competitive?

1.3 Thesis approach

The structure of the thesis is kept logical for the reader to prevent misunderstanding or confusing information. This report consists of six central chapters. The introduction chapter mainly explains why and how this thesis research has been done. The case company overview explains all necessary details for readers to understand the case company’s current overall situation. In the theoretical background chapter, different approaches by experts have been encompassed concerning industry overview, digital business, social media sector, and social networking sites for instance. Research methodology explains the suitable research

approach for this study, which is quantitative focus group research. The empirical research results chapter includes the qualitative focus group research results aimed to find customers' behavior and interest towards social media sites. All the sub-research questions are solved through qualitative focus group research.

Glostars is a new photo sharing experience that demands the application of some techniques or methods that concerns' each person's reality to generate ideas that are newer. Gathering people into groups and creating spontaneous expression environmental conditions for each participant, and assisting the interaction of everybody, can easily be done by following the Focus Group (FG) qualitative research method (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy 1998, p. 2). Data is collected through focus group discussions for Glostars. Five groups of 4-6 randomly mixed nationality participants aged 13 or above are created. Questioner and focus group discussions are constructed in English to make it possible for all participants to take part in the discussion. The author arranges face-to-face discussions where he is present as a facilitator and the whole discussion is recorded with permission for analysis. One focus group research session lasts for approximately one hour or less, and Glostars App is presented in the session to activate participants to share more related product ideas. Participants receive gifts like lunch or different tickets for active participation. Results from the sub-research questions together answer the main research question. Finally, the discussion and conclusion chapter includes a summary of findings, answers to the research questions, describes the theoretical contribution and managerial implications, gives suggestions for further research opportunities, and produces the most suitable new product ideas for Glostars.

1.4 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework makes it easier for the readers at a glimpse in any academic research to get the big picture of the study. Miles & Huberman (1994, p. 118) described conceptual framework as a written or visual presentation which demonstrates the main issues that have been studied either in graphical or in narrative form which should comprise the key concepts or variables, factors including the seeming relationships between them. The conceptual framework of

this study briefly explains what is researched and analyzed, how the research is done and what are the expected outcomes of this study.

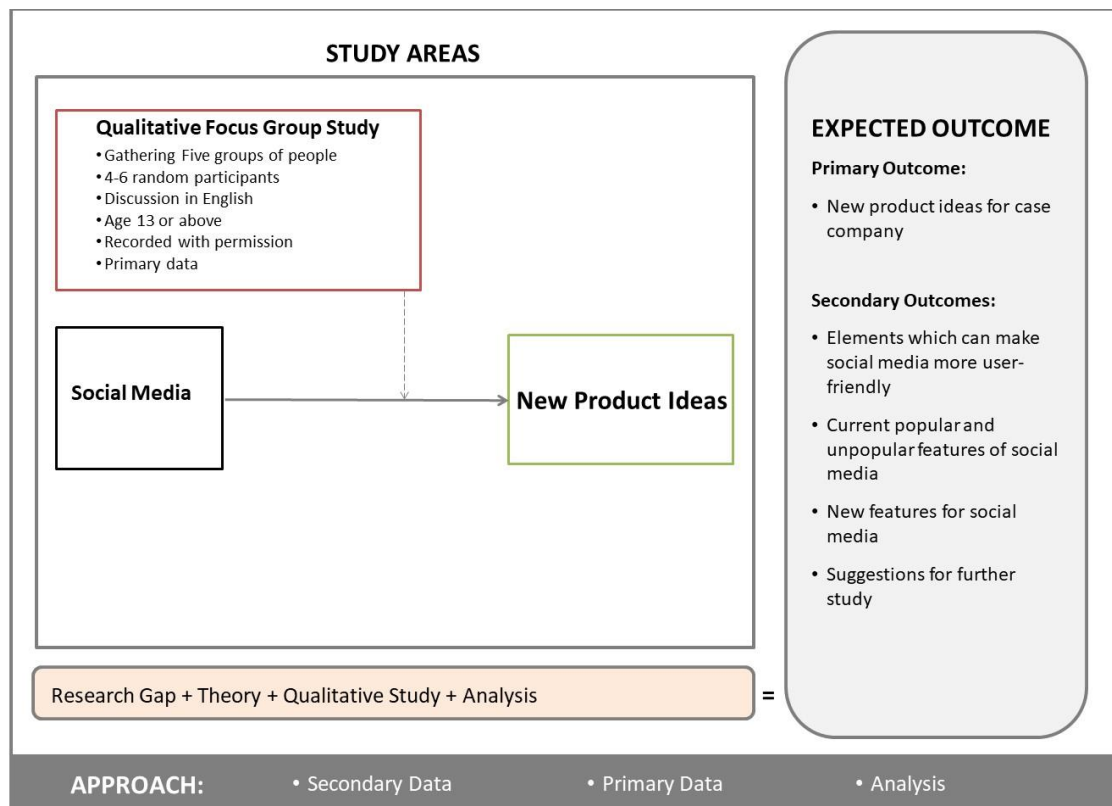


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for this research

In this study, the author intends to research the social media industry with help of a qualitative focus group study, which is done based on a random audience. The outcome of this study should provide new product ideas for the case company. The author uses both primary data from the focus group study and secondary data sources, for example, the case company’s current data, to secure the best outcome of this study.

1.5 Delimitations

Characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study and the aware decisions made during study plan development regarding what to include and what not to include can be called delimitations. Delimitations are the results from specific choices such as the choice of theoretical perspectives, objectives and questions, variables of interest, the research method (qualitative, quantitative, or

mixed), the theoretical framework, and the choice of participants made by the researcher. (Simon & Goes 2011, p. 4.)

The first delimitation of this study is that it concentrates mainly on photo-sharing sites, as the complete social media industry is too big for this research. The second important delimitation is the choice of the research method, which is qualitative focus group study because it will be more fruitful for research where people are able to give their open opinion about social media and share ideas. The third delimitation is the focus on a random target audience of mixed nationalities due to the case company wanting to develop their business worldwide. The fourth delimitation is that only five groups of people are involved in the qualitative focus group study because of lack of resources and an inadequate amount of time. The fifth delimitation is that the construction and content of the thesis are based on a business to end-user perspective to limit the amount of work. The sixth delimitation of this research is the aim to give priority to low development cost product ideas while making the final product roadmap as the case company wants to develop cheaper useful products for end-users in the first place. Lastly, the qualitative focus group research result depends on the participants' activities, which might not go as planned and the result might not turn out as expected. In addition to that, the results from the qualitative research are not influenced and have no direct relevance to other aspects besides this study.

2 Case company overview

This chapter gives an overview of the case company Glostars Oy. Currently, this company has been running for less than two years, and as a start-up, they are willing to learn fast and develop in the market as soon as possible.

2.1 Company profile

Glostars is a photo-sharing site. It allows individuals to host and share pictures with a global audience. Glostars wants "to give back to the people" for the contents they share. It lets people share the contents having the rights intact on the

contents and offers a mechanism to reward people. In contrast to existing sites, Glostars is a site consisting of user-generated contents. It offers a combination of existing popular features and newly developed features to provide a superior experience to the parties involved with this site. Glostars target two different audience segments: End Users and Customers. Currently “End Users” (i.e. individuals, groups or organizations) can upload and share their creative contents for free and other features (most of them for free) are in process to be developed. On the other hand, “Customers” are any profit or non-profit organizations who promote their brand, products or any campaign against certain advertisement or sponsorship fees; other paid services are not revealed in this study due to confidentiality reasons. Both non-paid and paid features are aimed to change the way in which social media is perceived these days. Glostars's financial plan has been developed based on a robust study of other established and growing industry players. Glostars's have also emphasized heavily on the financial terms and conditions as the business is based in the European Union. (Glostars 2017.)

Five student entrepreneurs from Lappeenranta University of Technology and Saimaa University of Applied Sciences established the company. The team started working on this idea in May 2015 in close collaboration with LUT Entrepreneurship Society (LUTES). Currently, the team consists of two co-founders and eight new members with different academic and cultural backgrounds. Based on its fast growth, Glostars also won the LUTES Summer Launchpad 2015 competition. The site was initially launched for a pilot limited to the Lappeenranta and Imatra areas in October 30, 2015. In addition, in just over two months of operations, it gained over 1000 users and over 1300 pictures uploaded on the site. In this fast-growing journey, the company got a significant amount of support from Lappeenranta University of Technology, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences, Microsoft, Wirma Lappeenranta, Visit Finland, City of Lappeenranta, Kora, Nordea Bank, Indiana Curry and LUTES.

On 12th January 2016, Glostars was opened globally with a launching event, prize distribution in a photo competition and a photo exhibition organized at Lappeenranta University of Technology. A start-up from Lappeenranta had developed a site allowing people to share pictures with a global audience. Glostars's

unique selling proposition (USP) is that users can participate in a photo competition that runs on a weekly, monthly and every four months' basis giving the opportunity to win exciting prizes. The winners are selected based on the stars (or rating) they get. Hence, Glostars offers a combination of existing popular features and integrates users into a process of content creation. It is now looking for new feature ideas, which later will be developed and introduced gradually in the coming days, to provide a superior experience to the parties involved.

A strong international team with relevant working experience, innovative product, the requirement of less capital, previous working experience from a successful start-up of the company's current CEO, low market-entry barriers, for instance, are the main strengths of this company. However, the company has some weaknesses such as insufficient personal funds, limited Finnish market knowledge, and limited industry experience. Increasing usage of social media all over the world, entrepreneur-friendly environment in Finland, high student movements across the world and particularly in Europe, increasing expenditure by companies in social media marketing all over the world, easy accessibility of related tools and systems at a very low price ensure potential opportunities. Some of the threats for Glostars are high competition, the possibility of new entrants, global economic condition, and changes in legislation, which might cause problems in the long run. These overall analysis elements comprise such areas as IT and security, intellectual property rights, competitive position and financial aspects.

2.2 Products and services

Glostars is a web-based site for hosting and sharing photos (later videos) and running photo competitions. Photo contests aim to reward creative skills among people and motivate them to develop photography skills. In contrast to previously established sites focusing on either professional or amateur photographers, Glostars aims to fulfill the need of both categories. Thus, community members can build an online portfolio, add friends, share, get ratings and comments, and win exciting prizes. (Glostars 2017.)

Glostars requires registration to use the site. The registration form is given on the landing page, which provides the first glimpse of Glostars. Registered users can then access all the service through Logging In. (Glostars 2017.)

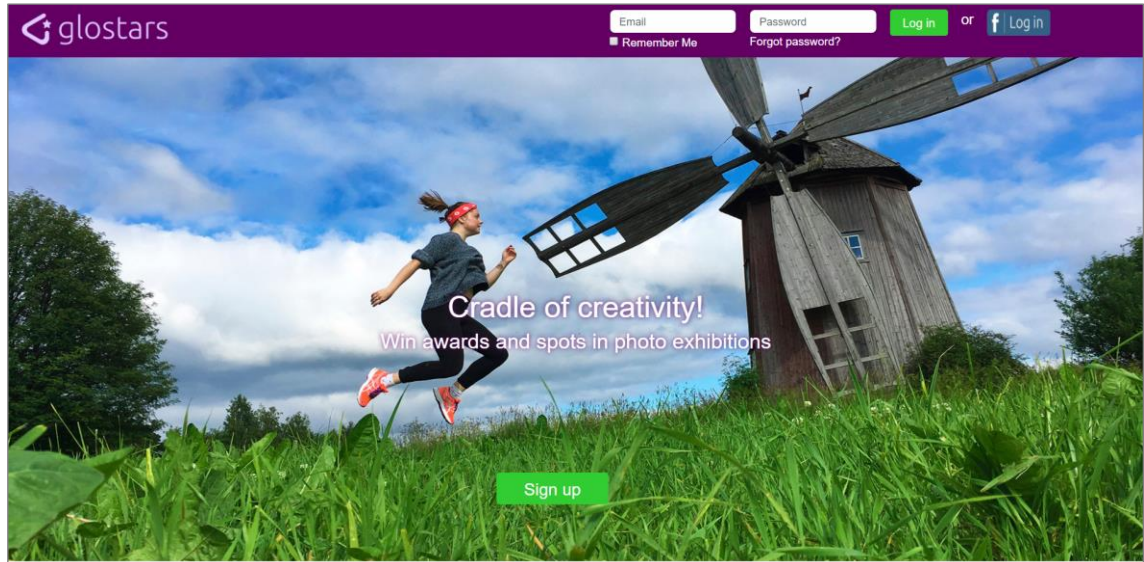


Figure 2. Landing page (Glostars 2017)

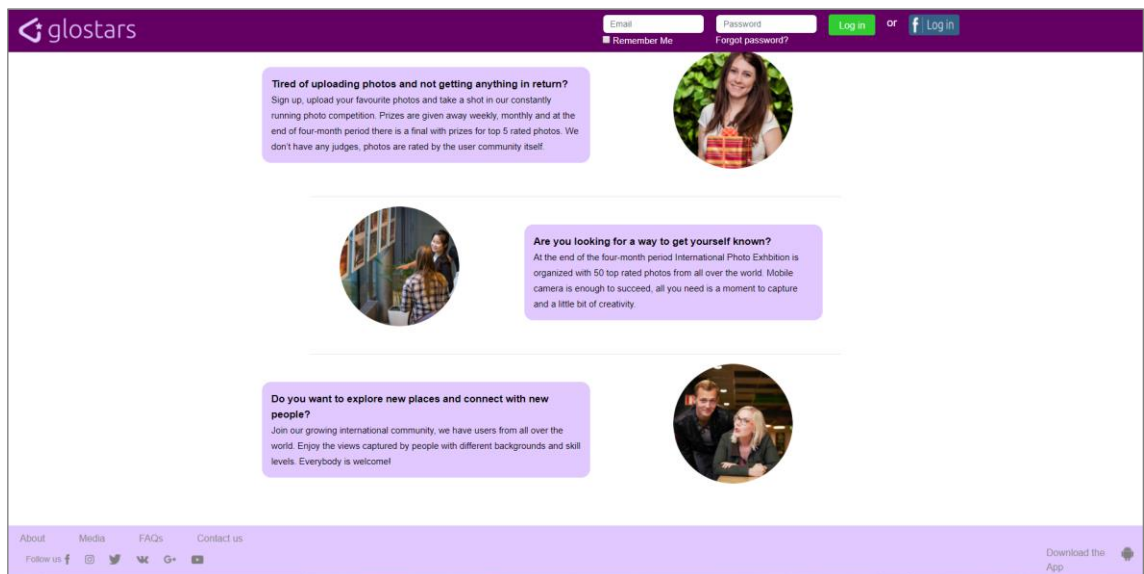


Figure 3. Landing page (Glostars 2017)

After logging in or registration, the user will have his or her home page consisting of a panel of recently uploaded pictures and friends' feeds. The users will be able to host the pictures on their personal profile and submit the photos in the contest section making it publicly seen. (Glostars 2017.)

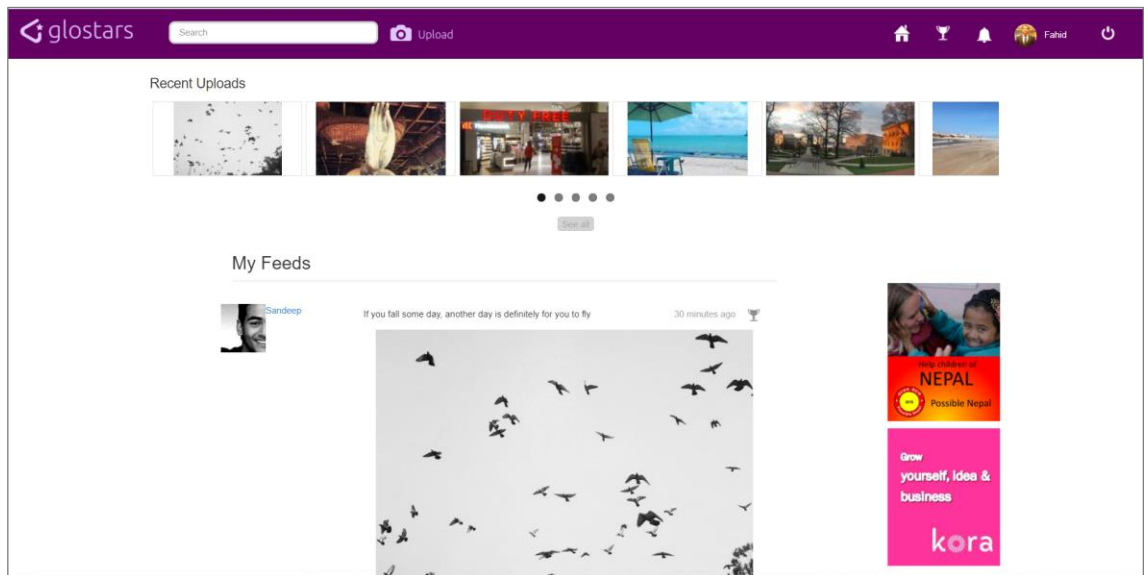


Figure 4. Homepage (Glostars 2017)

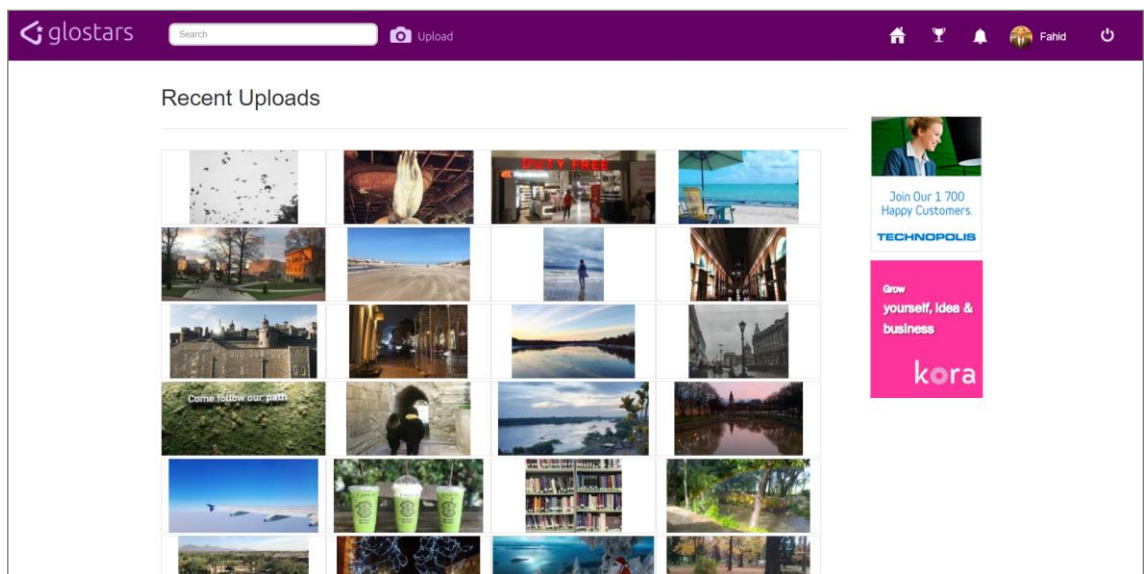


Figure 5. Recent uploads (Glostars 2017)

The goal of Glostars is to encourage users to create high-quality creative content that will capture the interest of a wide audience. Selection of the winner is based on community voting. Community members can evaluate the pictures using the scale 1 – 5 (one to five stars). The site is free and open globally, and the opportunity to win a prize is available for all global audience. (Glostars 2017.)

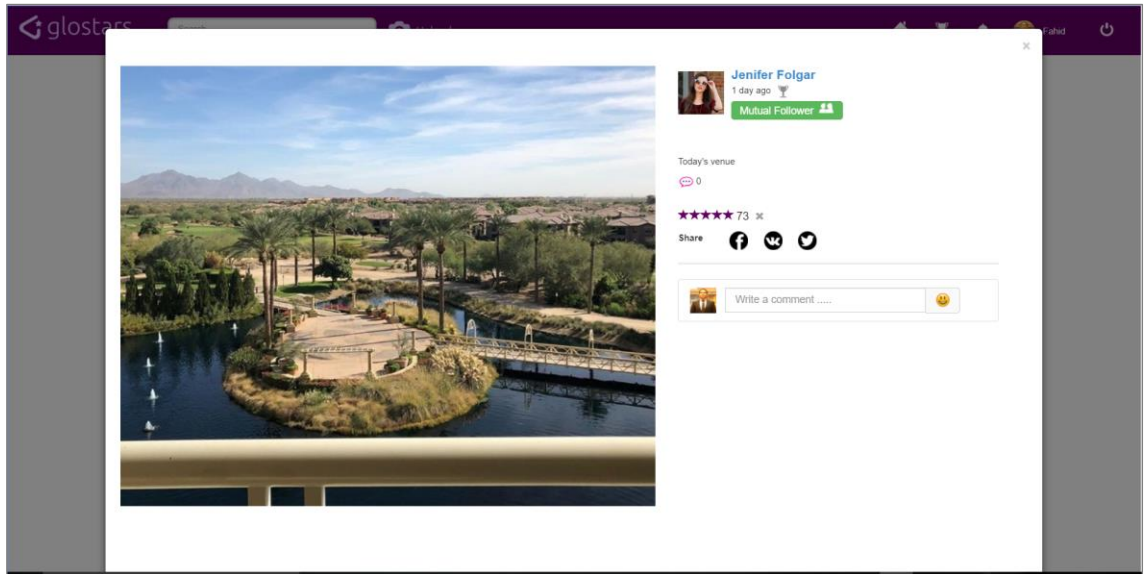


Figure 6. A picture in full view (Glostars 2017)

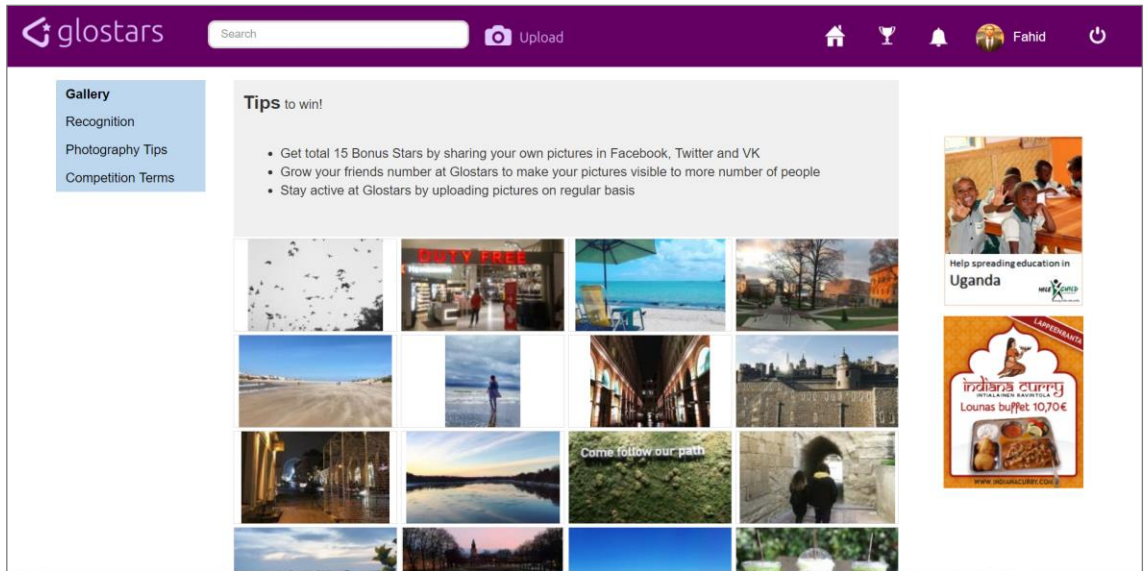


Figure 7. Competition page (Glostars 2017)

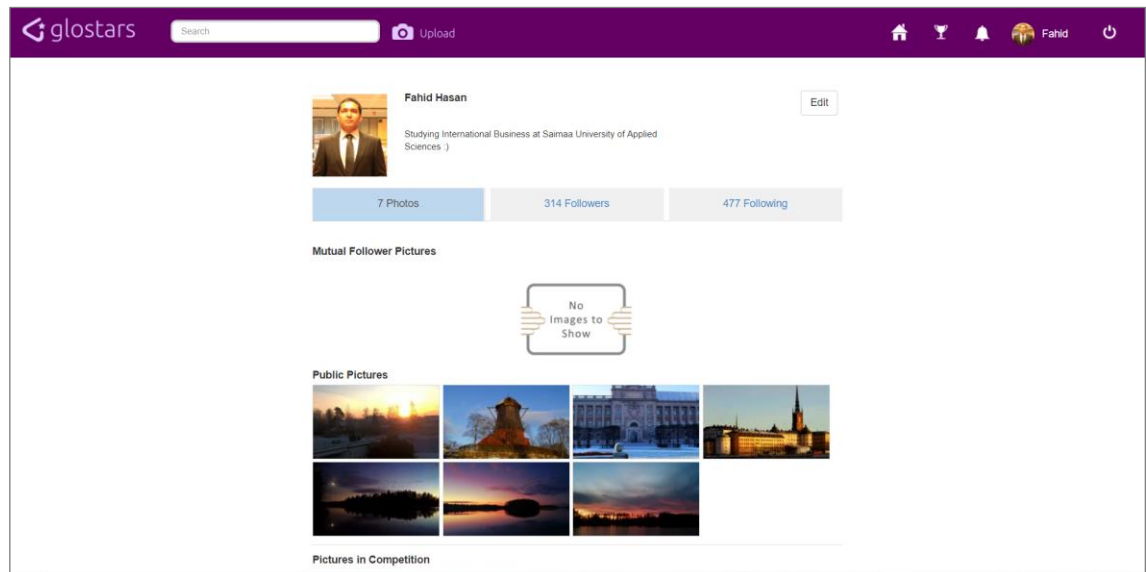


Figure 8. Profile page (Glostars 2017)

The concept above explains the current basic version of Glostars. The company's product development strategy aims to introduce new features over time such as gamification features, analytics, buy or sell the photographs, ad-free accounts, tips and coaching to improve photography skills to keep the users motivated and interested in continuing with the site.

2.3 Earning logic

Glostars' earning logic is based on the revenues generated from different companies for advertisements and sponsorships. Other sources are confidential and cannot be discussed in this paper as those are in a development stage. For online advertisement pricing, the company has benchmarked Facebook advertisement rates and undercut them to get a competitive edge over other social media. The company has also done long-term profitability calculations to ensure that their business is sustainable and profitable at the chosen rates. On the other hand, currently all the offered services are free for the end-users, but there are several services in their plan that will be introduced gradually and are expected to generate revenue from end-users as well. (Glostars 2017.)

3 Theoretical background

This chapter reviews literature relating to the industry, digital business, and discusses its implementation in this thesis study. The literature review has been arranged in four sections. The first section covers the industry outline including different topics. The second section talks about the digital business sector, its segmentation, and challenges. The third section explains the social media industry, its types and especially social network sites, which is the most important area for this thesis. The fourth and final section describes new product development and its initial step, idea generation.

3.1 Industry outline (Service)

A type of economic activity that is intangible, is not stored and does not result in ownership. A service is consumed at the point of sale (Bhakkad 2012, p. 89).

Services have been with us from the beginning of the civilization or even earlier (Melvin 1995, p. 484). National accounts are divided into three subgroups: primary activities, secondary or industrial activities, and tertiary or service activities rose services reputation in the period 1930-70 (Melvin 1995, pp. 483-485). *Service is a valuable action, deed, or effort performed to satisfy a need or to fulfill demand (BusinessDictionary 2016).* Services and goods are the two key components of economics (Investorwrods 2016). Services can be divided into four different types: consumer services, business services, public services, and others. However, these differences among services are not absolute and there are exceptions. (APHG Class Wiki 2016.) The services sector is the most dynamic sector of the global economy as it contributes around one-third of the global Gross Value Added (GVA), around half of employment, around one-fifth of global trade and half of the world is foreign direct investment flows (General Knowledge Today 2016).

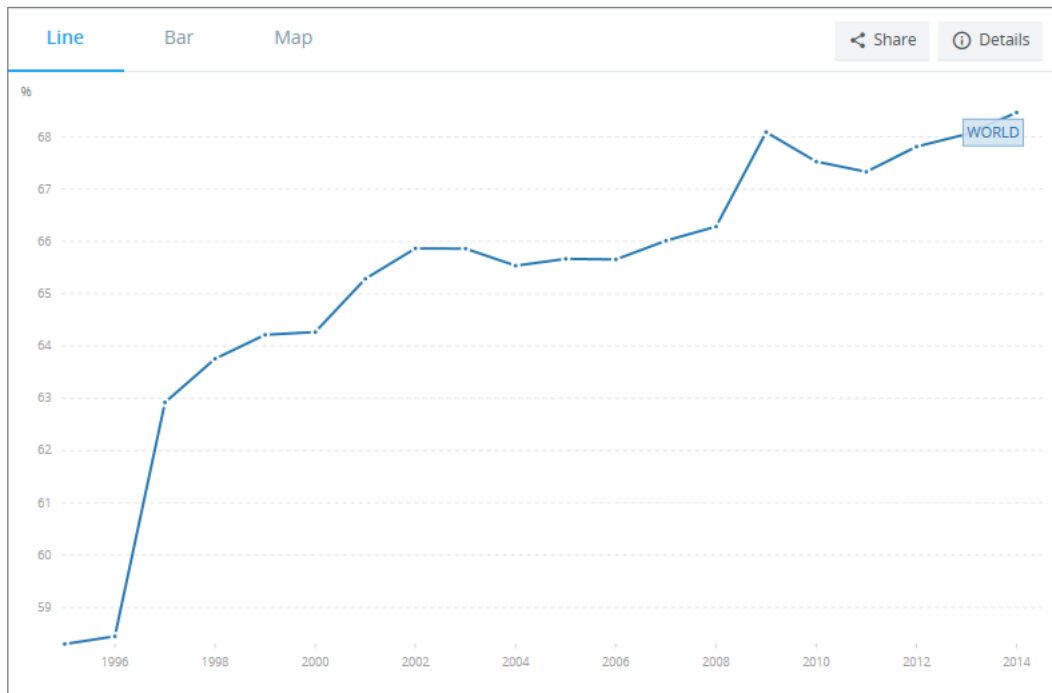


Figure 9. Services, etc., value added, percentage of world GDP (The World Bank Group 2016)

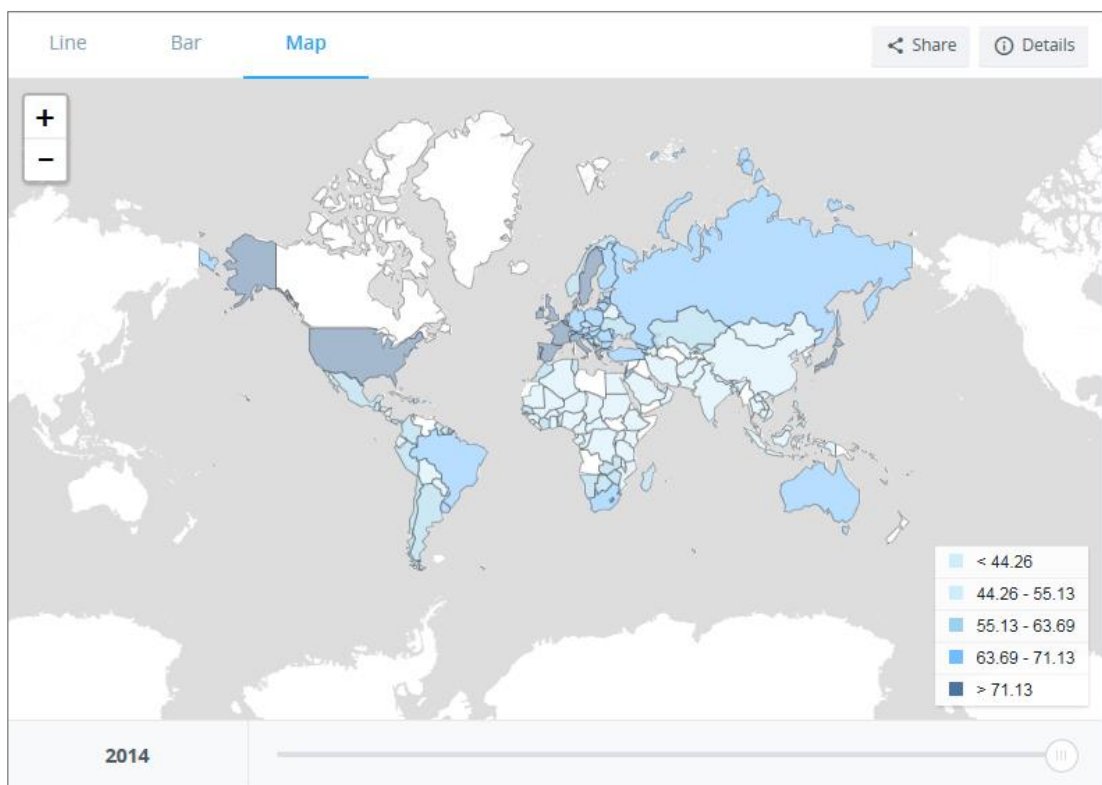


Figure 10. Services, etc., value added, percentage of world GDP 2014 (The World Bank Group 2016)

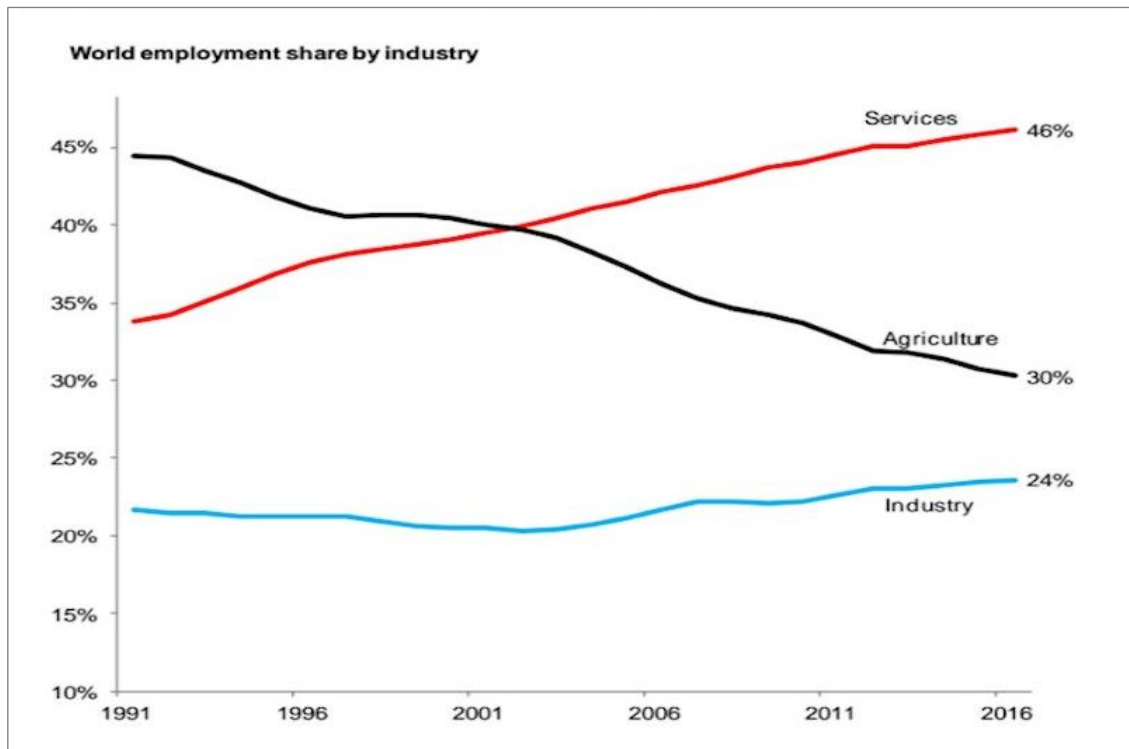


Figure 11. Services share of global employment (Holodny 2016)

Moreover, digital trends have made revolution in service industry and digital business will subordinate the product-based economy. Digital business will first take over customer interaction and it is emerging as the winning solution of this decade. (Innovation 2015.)

3.2 Digital business

Business is changing as information technology is taking a big part in this sector. Digital technology is driving the change and now it is possible to have businesses purely based online. This way digital technology is changing both the business and creating new operating models like e-commerce, social networking sites etc. Business is transforming in this digital world as e-commerce and social networking sites are getting revenue by promoting businesses online. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 1.) The inventor of the Internet realized that there would be a time when the whole world would be connected by Internet and today's largest Internet businesses such as Facebook have targeted the same goal. (Soskin 2010, p. xxiii.) The Internet is an inherently global medium, which enabled fast growth that created companies like Amazon, eBay, Google, Yahoo and so on

from nothing to big companies within two decades. The history of business has been changed by the commercialization of Internet and the progress of the World Wide Web, the pace of change in the business world has been relentless, and it is speeding up every day. (Soskin 2010, p. xxiii.) Because of digital business, it is expected to have more than seven billion people and businesses, and at least 30 billion devices to be connected to the Internet by 2020. The world of digital business brings together people, businesses and things communicating, transacting and or negotiating with each other and so on. Digital business helps to create new business designs by distorting the digital and physical worlds, which promise to the attendant in an unparalleled meeting of people, business and things that disturbs existing business models. (Lopez 2014.)

3.2.1 Segmentation of digital business

The impact of digitalization on business can be described in two ways as in terms of how it manifests itself and in terms of the competitive opportunity. Digital business activity can be segmented into a hierarchical model, which has three groups: Digital as a product itself, Digital as disruptive innovation, and Digital as a route to market. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 2.)

Digital as a product itself: In the field of digital business, data itself is the product or service, which is commonly known as 'big data'. This part of big data world is dominated by digital services businesses and professional services who can operate billions of data points, which are transferred from very large organizations such as governments, banks, retailers etc. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 3.)

Digital as disruptive innovation: In this aspect of digital business, it makes a market by using new technology or applying technology in a novel way that has not existed before. In this entrepreneurial part of the digital business where new products and services come into the market that was impossible or commercially unviable in the pre-digital age. This business can make or lose huge money for the founders and early investors in this process of having a sustainable income. These innovations establish and sustain themselves through the tools and techniques, which can be required to manage a digital route to a market and eventu-

ally sustainable business. A perfect example of this segment can be social networking sites, which did not exist more than a couple of decades ago. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 3.)

Digital as a route to market: This aspect of digital services is allowing the development of new products and services within established markets and or transforming the delivery of existing products and services. Currently, we are facing the most significant levels of change as old models are not working fast enough or breaking down and new models are taking time to establish and later increasing work efficiency, which is changing the market. The term e-commerce can be used as an example of this aspect, which is the most common way of Internet-based business. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 3.)

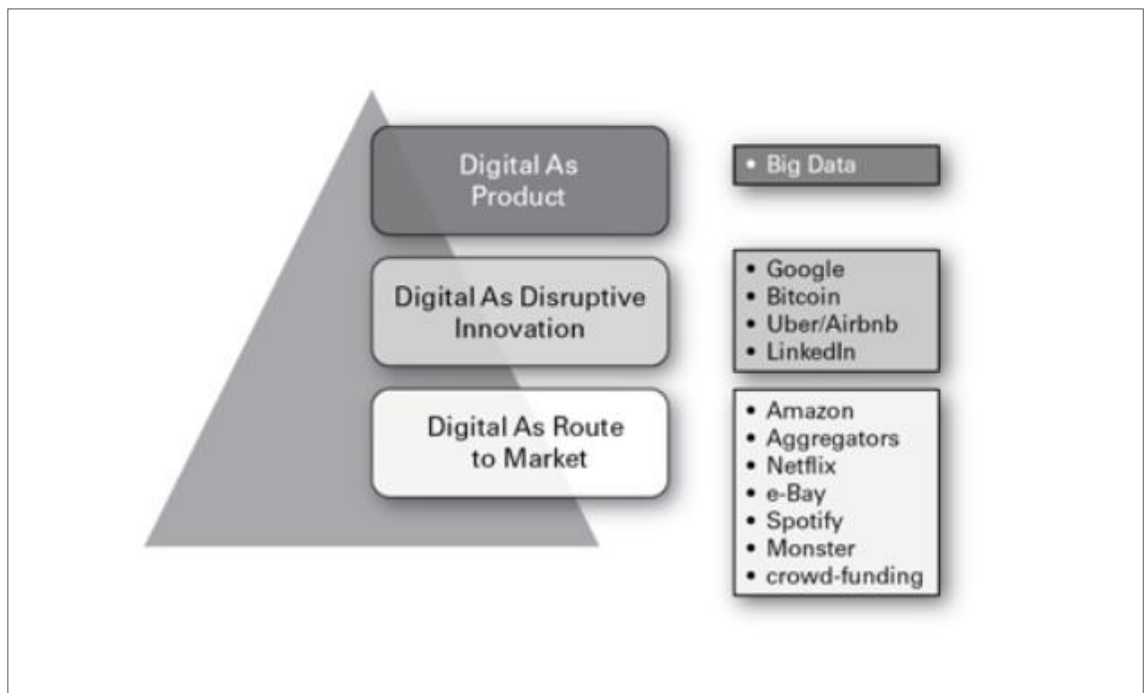


Figure 12. Segmentation of digital business by type (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 3)

This model also illustrates which segment of the digital business is mostly used. Normally only a few people will work in innovation segment and even fewer in the big data segment. However, almost every business will use digital as a route to

market, which is mostly dependent on digital as disruptive innovation technologies to make themselves well known in the market to grow profit. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 4.)

3.2.2 Operational challenges in digital business

The model below developed by Konstantine Karampatsos, a leading e-business expert, considers digital business in terms of the operational challenges faced by disruptive innovators and businesses using digital as a route to market in established markets (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 4).

Business creating innovative/disruptive technology	Business going digital in existing/traditional industries
Established	Established
Examples: Google, LinkedIn, Equinix	Examples: Monster, Asos, Booking.com
Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining over-qualified employees • Fostering constant innovation • Retaining customers 	Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage stakeholder expectations • Developing customer confidence • Finding employees with industry and digital expertise
Start-up	Start-up
Examples: Kagle, Citymapper, Evernote	Examples: JustEat, Transferwire, Moo
Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting and retaining talented people with non-pay incentives • Finding the right time to sell • Attracting and retaining customers • Balancing between finding funds and growing the company 	Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaking into the well-established industry • Developing customer confidence • Finding employees with industry and digital expertise • Balancing between finding funds and growing the company

Table 1. Digital business operational challenges (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 4)

Established and startup both have their disadvantages and opportunities but the issues faced by the clear majority working in established markets are classic leadership challenges. Those who are already successful in the disruptive quadrants

are facing challenges and it will be true for those who will become successful in the future. In this case, after some time, almost all organizations become less creative and more interested in protecting what they already have done and does not concentrate to build their digital business for future. (Bones & Hammersley 2015, p. 4.)

3.3 Social media

The basis of a new type of networked communication was formed after 1991 when Tim Berners-Lee connected hypertext technology to the Internet and weblogs, list-servers, and e-mail services started to help online communities and supported offline groups to communicate faster via the Internet. Networked media at that time could help to join or utilize to build groups but the service itself was not able automatically to connect one to another. The arrival of Web 2.0 shifted online services from offering channels for networked communication to interactive and two-way vehicles for networked sociality. Over the past two centuries, media technologies became part of everyday social practices while the telephone and the telegraph developed cultural practices like chatting on the phone or sending messages via the Internet and this interceded sociality became part of society's institutional fabric. (Dijck 2013, pp. 5-6.)

Day by day users moved more of their everyday activities to online sites, which were programmed with a specific objective. In the beginning, websites were operated as channels for social activity; the new sites called social media increasingly turn these channels into applied services converting the Internet cooler to use where they epitomize the larger conversion from all-purpose devices to linear applied services a development, which can be called as "appliancization." These sites slowly started to become as an indeterminate service for the exchange of communicative or creative content among friends like a group of college students, photo devotees, video enthusiasts who adopted this site for online interaction and slowly developed an interceded routine practice. Sociality and creativity can happen while people are living their lives and these sites help to share those contents and messages instantly at that busy time. Many of these habits used to be informal and ephemeral appearances of social life that have recently become flooded by social media sites. (Dijck 2013, pp. 5-6.)

Discussing something with friends, gossiping about something, sharing personal pictures, writing notes, asking friends how their day went, watching someone's home video and so on used to be commonly shared only with selected individuals back in those days. Through social media, these speech acts have turned into formalized captions shared with wider public, which took it to the different level. Social media sites have changed the nature of communication and Blogger (1999), Wikipedia (2001), Myspace (2003), Facebook (2004), Flickr (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006) etc. sites began to offer web tools and aimed at penetrating an online activity like microblogging, video sharing, chatting etc. Over the past decade, social media sites have tried to register most amount to end-users as soon as possible to establish their authority in the market. Companies like Facebook, YouTube and so on have succeeded to get a huge amount of client registration fast established their position. In every social media, more clients bring more content, which attracts more users to join, and business grows because of this process automatically if a company can become the market leader in one section. Still, new companies emerge every day with a fresh idea and try to fill up unsatisfied market need. (Dijck 2013, pp. 5-6.)

3.3.1 Types of social media

All social media sites and applications have gone through some kind of changes. It is impossible to list all site names and their separate developments. However, it is possible to distinguish various types of social media where the first type is called "social network sites" (SNSs). They promote interpersonal contact between individuals or groups; they help to create personal, professional, or geographical connections, for example Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Four-square, and Instagram. The second category sites are called "user-generated content" (UGC), which support creativity, foreground cultural activity, and promote the exchange and sharing of amateur or professional content. YouTube, Flickr, Myspace, GarageBand, Wikipedia and so on are famous UGC sites. The third category sites, mainly aim at exchanging products and/or selling them, and they can be called as trading and marketing sites (TMSs). Examples of these sites are Amazon, eBay, Groupon, and Craigslist. Play and game sites (PGS) is

a flourishing type with popular networking games such as FarmVille, CityVille, The Sims Social, Word Feud, and Angry Birds. (Dijck 2013, p. 7-8.)

However, this classification of social media sites is far from complete as this market is constantly changing. However, SNS and UGC sites are the main types on which online sociality and creativity have mostly developed. Moreover, there are no sharp boundaries between various types of the site because one type of company can easily try to add one or more specific niches to dominate online sociality. For example, Facebook's major target is to promote social networking, encourages its users to add and share creative contents such as photos and videos. YouTube generates creative content by users but it can also be considered a social network site because communities can share specific postings there too. Google tried to turn YouTube into an SNS though it has remained primarily a site for UGC, and later in 2011 they started their own social networking service called Google+. (Dijck 2013, pp. 8-9.)

In the meantime, Facebook and Google work hard to expand their existing sites with commercial and game services by partnerships and acquisitions, which has made them also key players in the TMS and PGS divisions. Defining types of social media sites are complicated and identifying their objectives is a main point to understand how sites build different functions of sociality and creativity or commerce or entertainment. Many sites started out in one target and gradually started to expand over each other's territory while trying to get users inside their own territory. Thus, it is easy to track how a few rapidly growing sites like Google, Facebook began to dominate online sociality, and they are occupying, as many niches as possible, which made new developers dependent on these sites for building applications. Finally, it is clear that the online ecosystem is embedded in a superior sociocultural and political-economic setting where it is unavoidably formed by historical circumstances. (Dijck 2013, pp. 8-9.)

3.3.2 Social network sites (SNSs)

Social network sites (SNSs) have attracted millions of users and many of these users have integrated these sites into their daily life activities. Uncountable

amount of SNSs are supporting a wide range of interests and practices with various technological accessibilities are currently in the market. Key technological features are consistent in every SNS but still customer responses vary a lot. Social networks help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities, and most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing friends. Some SNSs are created for diverse audiences while on the other hand, others are created based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality based identities. Sites also vary in the extent of mobile connectivity, blogging, and photo or video sharing. (Body & Ellison 2007, p. 210.)

The first recognizable social network called SixDegrees.com was launched in 1997, which allowed users to create profiles, list their Friends, surf the Friends lists, and was the first to combine these features. However, these features existed in the market separately before SixDegrees, for example profiles existed on most major dating sites and community sites. AIM and ICQ buddy lists helped to create lists of Friends which were not visible to others. Classmates.com affiliated people with their high school or college but users could not create profiles or list Friends in the beginning. From 1997 to 2006 the majority of popular SNSs came into market and developed this industry by attracting new users. (Body & Ellison 2007, p. 214.)

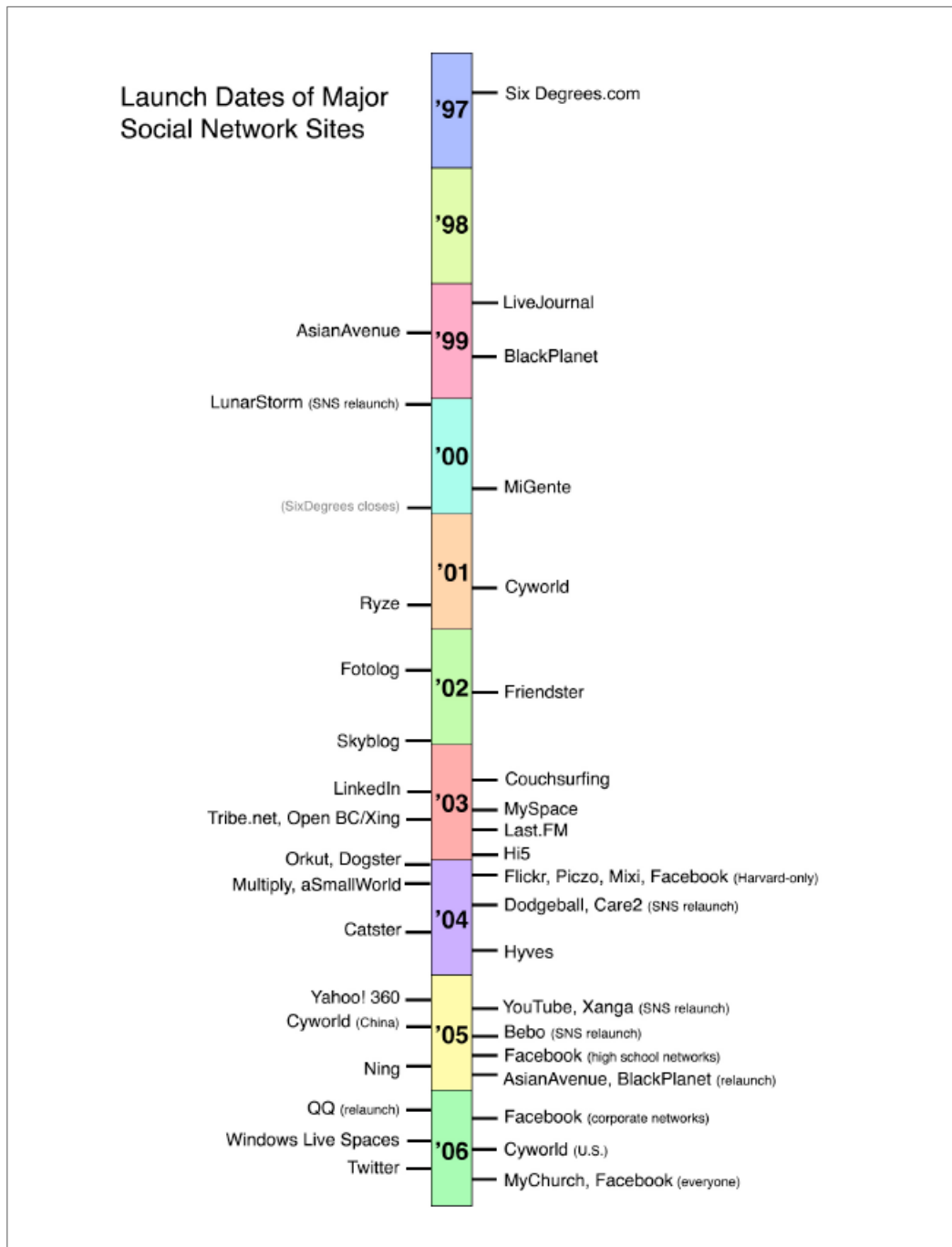


Figure 13. Launch dates of many major SNSs including dates when community sites re-launched with SNS features until 2006 (Body & Ellison 2007, p. 212)

After 2006, many social networking sites came into the market and got popularity because of their product differentiation and user-friendliness, for example LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Snapchat.

Social Network Sites: A definition

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (Body & Ellison 2007, p. 211.)

A social network is an application which contains a sign-in page, a user account, a profile and some more tools to help end users to enjoy their time on that methodical system. These applications are run on sophisticated hardware and software where there might be some minimum level restrictions. (Ryan 2011, p. 7.) Social networks are online communities, which help users to gather, communicate and share contents such as text, photo, music, and files. Users use sites to ask questions, give answers, share feelings, express their opinions and for many more purposes. (Haigh 2010, p. 7.)

Normally users are aware of using such applications in their personal and academic affairs. The purpose of SNS use is mostly for entertainment and communication, and most respondents are aware of the security aspects of SNSs. However, excessive time consumption and misusing personal information are the major steepchases in the way of accessing SNSs for users. (Emerald Publishing Limited 2017.)

Current popular social networking sites

In July 2017, the top two popular social networking sites were Facebook with one and half a billion unique monthly visitors and Twitter with an estimated four hundred thousand million unique monthly visitors (The eBusiness 2017). Different types of social networking sites are currently available in the market, for example photo and or video-sharing sites, instant messaging sites, and combined sites. Photo and or video sharing sites are initially created to share only photos and/or videos among the chosen community. It is possible to add a text or hashtags along with those contents. Instagram was the most popular photo and video sharing site in July 2017 with close to three hundred thousand million unique monthly visitors (The eBusiness 2017).

3.4 New product development (NPD)

Many different definitions exist for the term 'new product'. It can be described as totally new to the world products (10%), or can be new products, which will allow a company for the first time to enter an established market (20%). In addition, new products can be additions to existing product lines which supplement a company's established product lines (26%) or can be improvements in/revisions to existing products that provide improved performance and/or greater perceived value, or replaced existing products (26%). Moreover, it can be positioning of existing products targeted to new markets or market segments (7%) or can be newly reformed reduced cost products that provide similar performance at lower cost (11%). In every category, new product development process begins with an idea and ends up with a successful product, service or process. (Hetzer & Kraljic 2016, p. 17.)

3.4.1 Steps of NPD process

There are eight steps in the new product development process as described by Kotler & Keller (2011). The first step of the new product development process is idea generation. After generating the idea, the main question is whether the idea is worth considering or not. Therefore, in the second step, ideas are forwarded to idea screening where internal and external alignment is assessed. A concept is developed and tested in the third step (concept development and testing). The fourth step is marketing strategy development where, a cost-efficient and affordable marketing strategy for developed ideas is looked for. In the fifth step, a business analysis is done where the profitability of the product is examined. The product is developed in the sixth step. In the seventh step, market testing takes place of that developed product. The product sales must meet the expectations to pass the market-testing step. If everything goes perfectly then the last step is to commercialize the product. Overall, the new product development process is a complex process that needs to find the balance between many business elements. However, new product development is a crucial element of a company's activities, which must be done after a certain period. Shorter product life cycles and the need for prolonged product portfolio makes companies feel the increasing pressure and invest in new product development. (Hetzer & Kraljic 2016, pp. 17-18.)

3.4.2 Idea generation

Idea generation is the first step of the new product development process, which is highly important. The best ideas with new products can be found by discovering the best possible set of unfulfilled customer needs or technological innovation. Interacting with various groups and using creativity-generating techniques might generate new-product ideas. New-product ideas might be right in front of marketers' eyes where customers' needs are not matched. Most marketers view the world from the perspective of their own products and services and search for customers for them. Demand-first innovation and growth framework is needed to find out fresh ideas, which are designed with an impartial view and an outside-in perspective of demand opportunities. Many firms are going outside their boundaries by interacting with others, which is encouraged by the open innovation movement to get new ideas. External sources of new ideas include customers, scientists, employees, top management, engineers, channel members, marketing agencies, and even competitors. (Kotler & Keller 2011, pp. 573-574.)

4 Research methodology

This chapter explains the most suitable research approach which can be used by the researcher. In this research study, the methodology includes business research, data, qualitative business research, qualitative focus groups for idea generation, Focus group discussion script development, Process of data collection, and Data collection and analysis.

4.1 Business research

Business research is the application of the scientific method in searching for the truth about business phenomena. These activities include defining business opportunities and problems, generating and evaluating alternative courses of action, and monitoring employee and organizational performance. Business research is more than conducting surveys. This process includes idea and theory development, problem definition, searching for and collecting information, analyzing data,

and communicating the findings and their implications. (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin 2013, p. 5.)

Business research information needs patient study and scientific examination. Business research is not performed to support fixed ideas but to generate and test them by separating from personal assumptions and unfair attempt to find the prefixed truth. Business research is designed to ease decision-making process for all aspects of the business, for example, marketing, human resources, finance and so on. Research can decrease the risk of making a wrong decision by providing the necessary information on which to base business decisions. Research is an aid to managerial decision-making process but it can never substitute it totally. Business research can be done regarding production, finance, marketing, and management in for-profit corporations and can also assist nonprofit and governmental agencies as it applies to all related institutions. (Zikmund et al. 2013, p. 5.) This study is considered as business research as idea generation is a part of new product development process, which is considered to find a place in the border field of marketing and management.

4.2 Data

Data is another word for bits of information (singular – datum). Research uses data as the raw material in order to come to conclusions about some issue. It depends on the issue being investigated what data needs to be collected. (Walliman 2011, p. 65.)

Data is indefinable and ephemeral as they may be true for a specific time, place or observer, but might be different if any of these elements change. The more likely it is that inconsistencies and inaccuracies creep in as time passes from data collection date. (Walliman 2011, pp. 65-66.) Depending on its closeness to the event recorded data can be divided into two main forms called primary data and secondary data. In general, secondary data tends to be less reliable than primary data as secondary data is created from primary data and in the process, there might be some misinterpretation. (Walliman 2011, pp. 69-70.)

Data that has been observed, experienced or recorded close to the event are the nearest one can get to the truth, and are called primary data (Walliman 2011, p. 69).

The first and immediate recording of a situation creates primary data. Primary data is important to make sense of anything and can provide information about any surface of happenings. More data that is primary usually means more reliability but collecting primary data is time-consuming and costly. Distinguished by the way of data collection method, primary data can be divided into four basic types. Measurement is one of data collection method were collections of numbers indicating amounts, e.g. voting polls, exam results, car mileages, or oven temperatures. The next type is “observation”, where records are taken of events, situations or things experienced with researchers’ own sense and maybe with the help of an instrument, e.g. video camera, voice recorder, or microscope. Interrogation is another type where data is gained by asking and probing, e.g. information about people’s opinions, open ideas, likes and dislikes. The last type is participation where data is gained by experiences of doing things, e.g. the experience of learning to ride a bike, to drive a car, or to swim, which is very different from observing. (Walliman 2011, p. 70.) This research is fully based on primary data which is generated by interrogating groups of people (focus groups) by asking and probing opinions, open ideas, likes, and dislikes.

4.3 Qualitative business research

Different types of research methods are used in academic and applied research. In the business field, the commonly used types of research methods are quantitative and qualitative research based on the analysis type of data. Different researchers tend to favor a particular type of analysis that accords best with general concerns, the nature of data, previous references and research goal. However, in all cases, it is important to summarize the mass of raw data and display it in an organized way to detect patterns or trends. (Walliman 2011, pp. 63-64.)

Qualitative business research is research that addresses business objectives through techniques that allow the researcher to provide elaborate interpretations of market phenomena without depending on numerical measurement. Its focus is on discovering true inner meanings and new insights. (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin 2010, p. 133.)

Qualitative research is very useful in practice as it is less structured than most quantitative research. Many research firms specialize in qualitative research which does not depend on self-response questionnaires holding organized answers. The researcher must extract meaning from unstructured responses from a qualitative research, for example text from a recorded individual or group interview. Data interpretation is done by the researcher to extract meaning from those recordings who refines everything into useful information. (Zikmund et al. 2010, p. 133.) Business research must use different tools to solve different problems. The researcher should try to match the best tool to the research objective. Usually, qualitative research tools are appropriate when the research objective is less specific. Qualitative research is also appropriate when the emphasis is on a deeper understanding of motivations or on developing new ideas. Qualitative research can produce product ideas and process improvement concepts. (Zikmund et al. 2010, p. 133.)

It is possible to identify common situations that often require qualitative research. Qualitative research is commonly used when it is difficult to develop specific and actionable problem statements or research objectives. Qualitative research tools can find out human motivations and the documentation of activities is usually very wide-ranging by these tools. Usually, these research objectives require the development of an understanding of some phenomena in detail and depth. In addition, qualitative tools can be used when the research objective is to learn how to express some concept in informal terms or to learn how a phenomenon occurs in its natural setting. When the researcher is studying the reasons why something is liked or some behavior is performed depends very much on the situation surrounding the event, which requires qualitative study. Moreover, a fresh approach to studying some problem can be delivered by a qualitative study, by producing unique insights. Qualitative research requires an exploratory orientation and can

help clear up uncertainty and generate innovative ideas. (Zikmund et al. 2010, pp. 133-134.)

Qualitative Research	Research Aspect	Quantitative Research
Discover Ideas, Used in Exploratory Research with General Research Objects	Common Purpose	Test Hypotheses or Specific Research Questions
Observe and Interpret	Approach	Measure and Test
Unstructured, Free-Form	Data Collection Approach	Structured Response Categories Provided
Researcher Is Intimately Involved. Results Are Subjective.	Researcher Independence	Researcher Uninvolved Observer. Results Are Objective.
Small Samples—Often in Natural Settings	Samples	Large Samples to Produce Generalizable Results (Results That Apply to Other Situations)
Exploratory Research Designs	Most Often Used	Descriptive and Causal Research Designs

Figure 14. Qualitative and Quantitative Research comparison (Zikmund et al. 2010, p. 136)

There is much research done to find out people’s attitudes and feelings. Qualitative research is mostly used to explore how people feel about themselves. Through the process, it is also possible to find out how they feel about the products and services they use or interested to use in future. Knowing customers or prospective customers’ thoughts and feelings in the exploratory stages of a new research project is often important through qualitative research. When little or no previous research has been done on a subject, can find a starting point by these research findings. (Hague 2006, p. 75.) Market research executives or researchers are solely involved in the process of qualitative research by doing the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Researcher always has a better understanding of the subject because they have the first-hand information. Focus groups, Depth discussions, and Observation are the main techniques used in qualitative research. (Hague 2006, p. 76.)

4.4 Focus groups

Focus groups share many common features with less structured interviews, but there is more to them than merely collecting similar data from many participants at once. A focus group is a group discussion on a particular topic organized for research purposes. This discussion is guided, monitored and recorded by a researcher (sometimes called a moderator or facilitator). (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick 2008, pp. 291-295.)

Merton and Fiske first used focus groups to conduct audience studies in the 1940s (Cohen & Crabtree 2008). These focus groups as a research method in market research were applied in the work of the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University. The success of focus groups as a research method especially in marketing sector resulted in its wider use. Through focus group, research methods have diverged over time and this method is used often in academic research. (Gill et al. 2008, pp. 291-295.) Focus groups as a research method are ideal for idea generation, concept testing, and exploring a problem for example, when the researcher is not sure exactly what issues are at stake (Hague 2006, p. 77).

Typically, a group discussion of 4 to 10 participants led by a trained moderator and the session might take approximately one to two hours is focus group research. The researcher uses group dynamics principles to guide the group in exchanging ideas, feelings, and experiences on a specific topic which is set before. Focus groups are an important tool for acquiring new ideas, feedback regarding new products, as well as various other topics. Companies wishing to develop, package, name, or test market a new product, to discuss, view, and/or test the new product can carry out focus group research before a product is made available to the market. Focus groups can provide priceless information about the possible new product or potential market acceptance of the current product. Focus groups allow researchers to study people in a more natural setting than a one-to-one interview in business, social sciences, and urban planning. Since the idea of focus groups is easy to understand it has a high apparent validity, which means the results are believable. Focus group study is low in cost as a researcher

can get results for a group of people relatively quickly which can increase the sample size relatively easily. (Sachdeva 2008, p. 173.)

Focus group alternatives include:

- **Two-way focus group**, which requires two focus groups at the same time where one focus group watches another focus group and discusses the observed interactions and conclusions.
- **Dual moderator focus group**, which requires two moderators where one moderator runs the session which another ensures that all the topics are covered and the session progresses smoothly.
- **Dueling moderator focus group**, which requires two moderators where moderators deliberately take opposite sides on the issue under discussion to open up the conversation.
- **Respondent moderator focus group**, where one or more of the respondents act as a moderator temporarily.
- **Client participant focus groups**, where one or more client representative participates in the discussion to get a deeper understanding of the research and provide insights.
- **Mini focus groups**, where small groups are comprised of 4 to 5 participants in place of 8 to 10 participants.
- **Teleconference focus groups**, where telephone network is used for group conversation.
- **Online focus groups**, where computers are used to connect focus groups for conversation. (Sachdeva 2008, p. 173.)

Compared to other forms of traditional marketing research, traditional focus groups can provide accurate information while spending less money on the research. There still can be costs as if a product or service is to be marketed on a worldwide basis, it would be necessary to gather respondents from various parts of the world. Traditional focus group research can require considerable expenditure in travel, which can be avoided by online focus group arrangement. Because of the flexibility and accurate outcome, the use of focus group research has steadily grown over time and is becoming increasingly popular. (Sachdeva 2008, p. 173.)

At the beginning of a focus group study, an important decision is to select participants who will represent the types of customer who will use that product or service. The second important decision is to decide what the final learning for the research is. The third task is to generate a step-by-step "transcript" for the moderator to follow while doing the actual discussion. The next step is to get a skilled moderator to facilitate the discussion so that everyone participates and the group stays on track. For a moderator, it is important to practice the whole session before starting the actual session. It is also possible to include observers and listeners in the research to get a maximum output from the research. The next important thing is moderator's flexibility in using the script, which usually gives the moderator questions to ask and topics to cover. The moderator should change the order of questions and topics if needed to keep the discussion flowing smoothly. The moderator has to be a good judge of time and has to decide when to encourage more discussion to get additional ideas on a topic and when to move on as nothing new is coming from the discussion. The final important task is to be ready to collect data by taping or video recording the sessions with the permission of the participants and have one or more people take good notes and act as an observer. (Sachdeva 2008, p. 174.)

In focus groups, sometimes research sponsor's involvement in the process is possible which makes it unique. The sponsor can observe the group and its dynamics in real time draw their own insights from the conversations and observations. In many research projects, it is possible for the client to supply the moderator with new topics or questions that are generated by observing in real time. This depth option does generally not exist in an individual interview, other group interviews, or survey research. Some researchers allow for product preparation and testing, as well as other creative exercises in the research. As focus group sessions become longer, more activities are needed to bring out deeper feelings, knowledge, and motivations, which requires planning. Besides the discussion, it is possible to involve the participants in writing or drawing sessions or creating a visual compilation, other common activities like free association, picture sort, photo sort, or role-play. Focus groups can be a primary methodology but often used as an exploratory technique. (Sachdeva 2008, p. 174.)

4.5 The research setting

The research setting is the physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study. In this section, researcher is moving on to describe research setting of this study, after having described relevant theory in the previous chapters.

4.5.1 Focus group discussion script development

The focus group discussion script has four parts. In the introductory part, the mentor introduces himself to the participants. After that, the mentor helps the participants to know each other and get comfortable, which is crucial for a better output from the focus group discussion. Then he explains the reasons for this research, the language of this conversation, and ensures the confidentiality of the participants. Finally, the mentor again reminds of the topic of the group discussion to keep all the participants well informed. The next part of the script is “Guidelines”, where the mentor explains all the general rules to everyone to make sure a fruitful output from each participant and avoid misunderstandings.

The “Questions” part of the script is most important and has seven questions to find out the overall picture of social media and some new ideas. The first question “Which social media do you use? (For example, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc.)” is designed to find out the current most used social media. The second question “What aspects do you like about social media?” is intended to find out current industry trends and most used features and services. The third question “What aspects do you dislike about social media?” is aimed to find out current negative sides of the industry, and unpopular features and services. The fourth question “What new things (services/features) in social media you would like to see in future? (For example, new privacy settings, photo or video buy and sell)” is designed to get general new ideas of social media, which gives more freedom to the participants to share a broad range of ideas. The fifth question “Have you heard about Glostars?” is delivered to understand the participants’ previous knowledge about the case company and marketing effectiveness of the case company. After this question, the mentor shows the newly launched Glostars android App on his phone and explains the current idea shortly. This application

was launched on 1st November 2017 and the beta version was available in Android app stores during this research. The mentor shows all pages of the application and explains how the logic of this application works. He explains only the current service ideas and hopes participants might give some new ideas or directions from that point where he stopped.

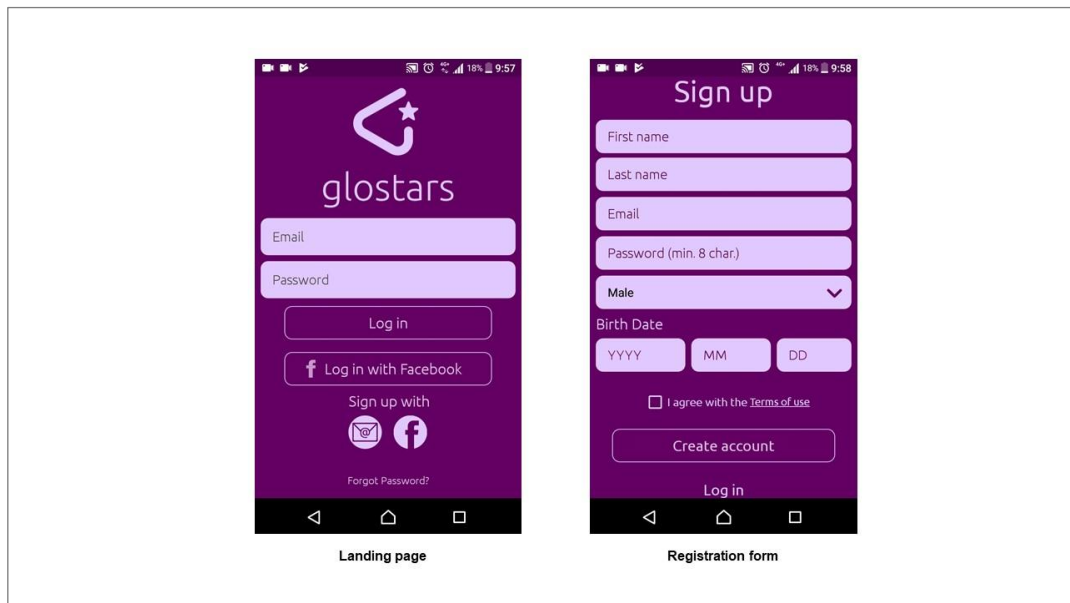


Figure 15. Login and sign-up pages of Glostars app

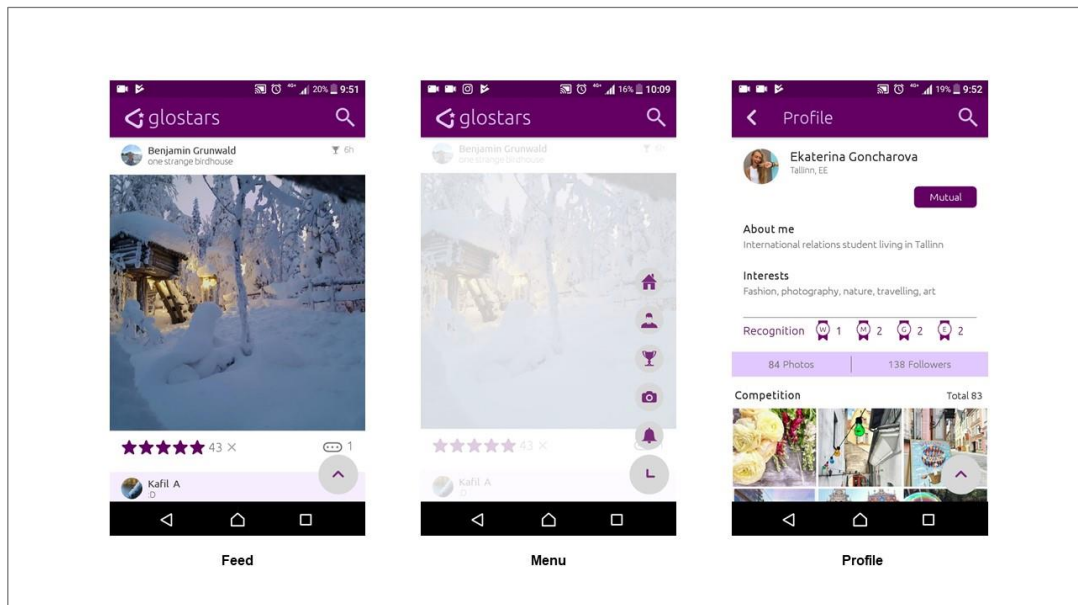


Figure 16. User feed, menu and user profile pages of Glostars app

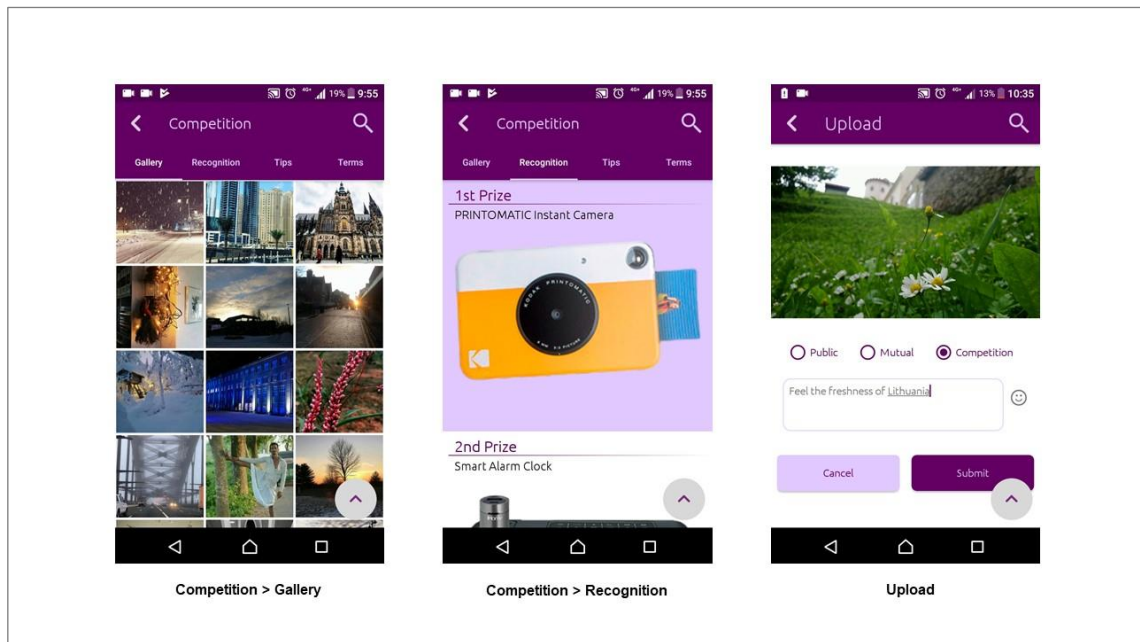


Figure 17. Competition gallery, prizes and photo upload category pages of Glostars app

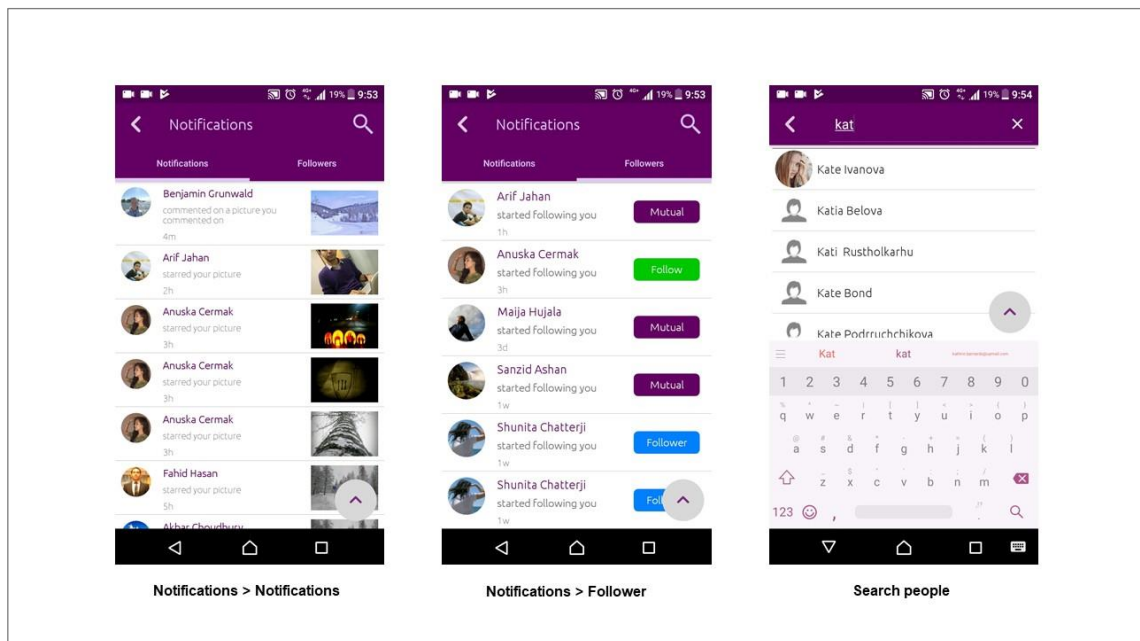


Figure 18. Notifications and search users' pages of Glostars app

After every participant gets a general idea of Glostars App, the mentor asks the next question "What new things (services/features) and changes in Glostars you would like to see in future? [What are the new features Glostars should develop?]" to get new ideas, which are directly provided for Glostars development in future.

The seventh question “Which thing (service/feature) Glostars should develop next?” is formed to find out what the most needed feature is for Glostars to develop in the near future. After asking all the questions the mentor moves to the last part of the script called “Ending notes” where he ends the session by thanking everyone and provides details about how to know about the findings if someone is interested. The original focus group script can be found in the appendix.

4.5.2 Process of data collection

The first approach to data collection is planning the whole process. The author created a focus group discussion script with the help of a case company supervisor and later corrected it according to the comments by the university supervisor. The author and case company supervisor sent messages to suitable English speaking random participants from Lappeenranta and invited them to join this focus group discussion. Most of the participants who agreed to join the discussion were previously known persons. In some cases, the author asked interested participants to invite their friends to join with them in the discussion, which made the participant collection process faster. Five groups of random participants combining different nationalities who were living in Lappeenranta joined in the discussion. Most of the participants were university students as they are the prime target users of Glostars. The size of the focus groups was 4 to 6 people as it was challenging to arrange the participants’ time schedule and an inadequate amount of time for the research. Most of the participants knew each-other as they study and live in the same area, which made the participants more relaxed to talk freely in the discussion. Group discussions were held in different places including the case company’s office, the author’s home, a participant’s home and the Lappeenranta University of Technology library meeting room to make it more comfortable for participants to join. The time of the discussion was also varied depending on the group’s suitability. Group discussions lasted for approximately 30 minutes to one hour each. It was difficult for the participants to give many ideas about the social media industry as a lot has been already done for this market which was the reason for shorter discussion times than expected. During the discussion some refreshments were arranged for the participants if the place was suitable. The

author acted as a moderator and practiced the session several times to train himself, and tried to use group dynamics principles to guide the groups in exchanging ideas, feelings, and experiences on a specific topic of social media idea generation. These focus groups were used as an important tool for acquiring new ideas for Glostars and feedback regarding a new product and potential market acceptance of the current product of Glostars.

At the beginning of the focus group session, introduction of the topic and getting to know each other was the main focus. This was because though most of the participants were familiar with each other one or more participants were new to others, which required a formal introduction of the whole group. The objectives, aims of the research and methods to be used in the research were explained clearly after the introduction, which was necessary to give the participants enough information and awareness that the research will be valuable to improve the social media industry and its surroundings. All the questions, which were raised during the info session, were answered clearly to make sure a perfect discussion environment.

After that, the mentor started the focus group discussion by asking questions one by one and all the participants were given enough time to answer every question. During the focus group discussion, the case company application was shown to the participants to make sure the customized idea generation for Glostars. At the end of the session, participants were given the chance to give overall comments and feedback about the whole project. Overall, this focus group research was done to generate new ideas for the case company Glostars and the total data collection planning and the process took the whole month of November 2017.

4.5.3 Data collection and analysis

All the focus group discussions were recorded, and soon after the group discussion, the author started to analyze individual focus groups. First, he made a backup copy of the tapes to make sure that nothing gets lost during the analysis process. Then he transcribed carefully all the group discussions by listening repeatedly to ensure the correct version of participants' opinions. The five groups in this research project were mentioned as group A, group B, group C, group D

and group E. All participants' identities were kept secret in this research, and to ensure the confidentiality while transcribing and reporting, in place of participants' names, their number and group name was mentioned. For example, the first group's first participant was called Participant 1, group A. The mentor listened to the discussion tape recordings, reviewed field notes, checked the group discussion script and read the transcript during data analysis.

Group A	
Number of participants	06 (03 female and 03 male)
Age group	Approximately 20 – 30 years
Nationalities	Bangladesh, Iran, and Russia
Discussion time	Approximately 1 hour
Place of discussion	Glostars office
Group B	
Number of participants	05 (01 female and 04 male)
Age group	Approximately 21 – 30 years
Nationalities	Finland, Iran, and Russia
Discussion time	Approximately 1 hour
Place of discussion	Author's home
Group C	
Number of participants	05 (02 female and 03 male)
Age group	Approximately 18 – 25 years
Nationalities	Finland, India, and Russia
Discussion time	Approximately 0.75 hours
Place of discussion	LUT library meeting room
Group D	
Number of participants	04 (04 female)
Age group	Approximately 20 – 23 years
Nationalities	Russia
Discussion time	Approximately 0.5 hours
Place of discussion	LUT library meeting room
Group E	
Number of participants	06 (06 male)
Age group	Approximately 18 – 30 years
Nationalities	Finland, Russia and Vietnam
Discussion time	Approximately 1 hour
Place of discussion	Participant's home

Table 2. Demographics of groups

At first, the mentor prepared a report of the individual focus groups in a question-by-question format with amplifying quotes and rechecked it with the help of the case company supervisor. After everything was in order, the mentor did a summary of the individual analyses of the different groups to identify patterned outputs and unusual outputs by comparing and contrasting results from individual focus groups in different categories. The mentor looked for emerging themes by questions and then constructed typologies and diagrams of the analysis to make the results clear to the reader. He described the findings and used quotes to illustrate and choose the sequence question by question as it is easier to understand. Finally, he shared the report for verification with the case company supervisor and then revised it before finalizing the report.

5 Empirical research results

This chapter describes the result from the focus group question-by-question analysis. Moreover, it includes a summary of the results, illustrating the findings from this research.

5.1 Popular social media

The first focus group script question “Which social media do you use? (For example, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc.)” was designed to find out the currently most used social media and the probable reasons for that from where Glostars might get valuable information and ideas. Most of the participants mentioned they use Facebook as it has the highest number of users among the social media, but participants from Russia emphasized the usage of VK. They highlighted the fact that they started using Facebook after they came to Finland and built a network with international people. It shows that having a multinational audience on the site automatically can help to expand the market a great deal, as can be achieved by **global marketing**.

I use Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp mostly to communicate with my family and friends back home. (Participant 2, group C)

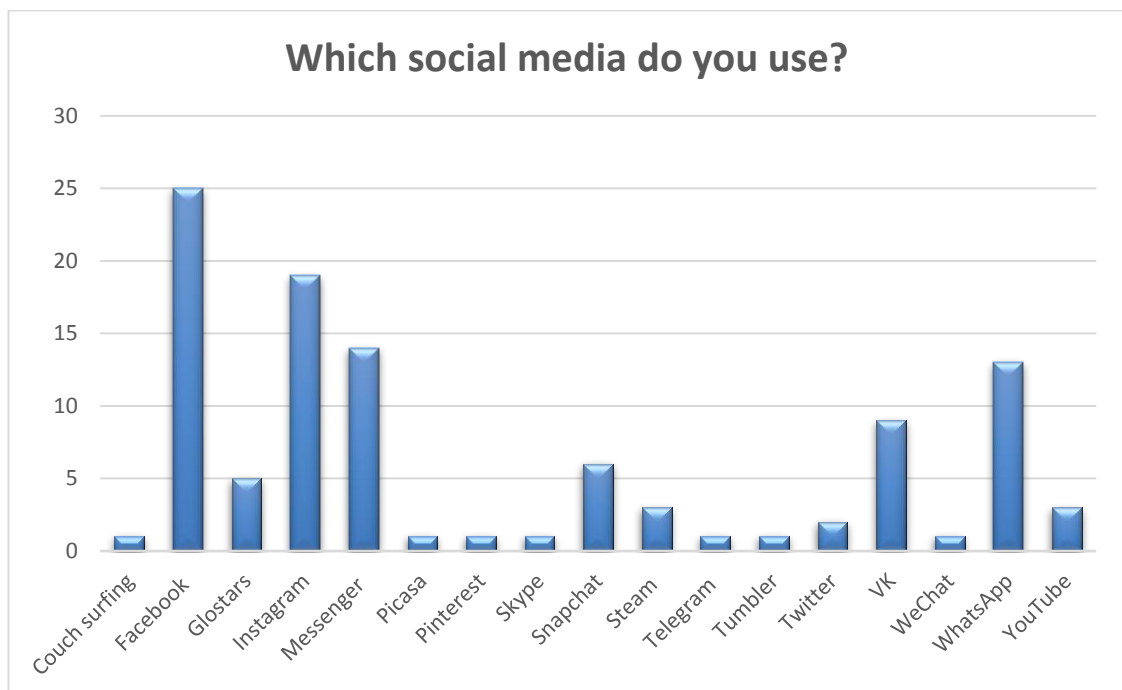
I use Facebook just for communication with my friends. (Participant 6, group E)

All Russians are using vk.com, Instagram, and YouTube if you count it as a social media. I use sometimes Facebook because of studying here. (Participant 1, group A)

Instagram is growing rapidly and 19 participants were using it as it has an easy to use interface and it combines all cool features on the market. It is efficient and saves time, a couple of participants mentioned. Overall, it can be said that having a fast and **simple interface** and **combining features** can motivate users to use a site, which eventually should bring more users to the site.

I count Instagram most efficient as nowadays it combines everything. Instagram's interface is really easy to use which saves a lot of time. (Participant 3, group A)

I use Instagram for uploading my photos, experiences, and plans. (Participant 6, group E)



Graph 1. Different social media used

Approximately half of the participants mentioned about using Messenger and WhatsApp regularly. They mentioned these services were created with lots of convenient options (individual chat, group chat etc.) and help to connect easily.

These services are widely used to communicate with groupmates for study purposes (discussion, file sharing etc.). Overall, it shows that having an easy to use **instant messaging feature** is important for all the social media.

I like Messenger because I think it is perfectly created. (Participant 5, group A)

I like Messenger because I can connect with everyone easily. (Participant 1, group C)

I use WhatsApp for studying in Finland. I use it quite a lot for contacting with group mates. (Participant 6, group E)

However, only three participants mentioned about using YouTube but the actual number should be more as some participants might not count it as social media. Some users like making videos and some liked to watch videos on YouTube because of getting better-suggested videos while watching one. It shows that having a **video uploading feature** with better suggesting related videos service might be a good option to have on a social media.

I spent most of my time on YouTube as I get better-related video suggestions after watching one. (Participant 1, group A)

Sometimes I am using YouTube because I'm making videos. (Participant 3, group D)

A couple of users mentioned about gaming platforms like Steam, which was useful for gaming, streaming, cluster gaming and getting money out of those. A **gaming feature** with interesting online gaming options and earning money can be a huge advantage for a social media.

I think one better app I am using is Steam which is a platform for streaming and cluster gaming or digits of business. We can make streams and get a lot of money through streams. (Participant 4, group E)

I use Steam and a bunch of other gaming platforms. (Participant 5, group E)

A couple of participants use Pinterest and Couch surfing to search for information on some of their personal interests like traveling or cooking. In social media, these options can be added by offering a **page feature** for a different use.

I use Pinterest to find some ideas. If I want to find something, I just type it there and some pictures with articles from other people appear. I can choose topics of interests and have updates of them. (Participant 4, group D)

I use couch surfing and other groups related to traveling around the world. (Participant 2, group E)

There were some users of Snapchat, Glostars, Twitter, Telegram, Picasa, WeChat, Skype and Tumbler among the participants. The above analysis yielded product development ideas for social media as follows: global marketing, simple interface, combining cool features, instant messaging, video, gaming and page option.

5.2 Popular features of social media

The second focus group script question “What aspects do you like about social media?” was intended to find out current social media industry trends and most used features and services. Most of the participants mentioned they use different social media to chat, make an audio call, make a video call, send pictures and files, connect with their friends or family, mostly privately. Some of the participants emphasized that voice messages are very much needed nowadays because they are fast to send and they do not need the sender to write anything. Participants were interested also to know if their messages were read or not. Some participants were happy about being able to message anyone across the world. Among student participants, all the above-mentioned messaging services were popular because students need to have connections with study mates and maybe teachers, which are the only reasons they were using those services. Moreover, all these services were widespread because they are free. It seems that having a paid service to call directly on the phone is not needed anymore as most people are using one of the services like Facebook messenger, WhatsApp or VK messenger. Overall, it appears useful to have an **instant messaging feature** integrated to the site, which can be used free to chat, for audio call or video call, to send pictures and files, for voice messages, to see a message read or not option or for group chat etc. with everyone while keeping privacy in mind. This feature can help to gain popularity in the social media industry.

For me it's just to talk and connect with my friends or family or relatives, just to read some news or creative materials but I'm not interested to be familiar with a stranger and other people I do not know in the real life. (Participant 5, group A)

In WhatsApp, I can chat with my friends, see if they read messages or not, send pictures so fast. In Instagram, you can do it too. But in WhatsApp, it's faster than on Instagram because you do not have to save all pictures manually. (Participant 2, group D)

In general, I do not like any social networks I use it because of my studies because I need to have connections with my study mates and that's why I am using it. Of course, there are a lot of other information such as groups of shops or some different events, but I use official sites of this stuff. (Participant 1, group E)

Now you can attach documents and stuff into the chat like messenger, and you can attach audio and video files. It is starting to replace an e-mail and stuff. I think it is too much easier to work and share with friends in a chat with all these stuff. Like not sending it via email. (Participant 5, group E)

Newsfeed was the second most popular service, which participants used to connect with their friends, family and even unknown people mostly publicly. They liked to create their own newsfeed by adding groups, news, pages, themes, music and posting something and seeing what others post. There is a lot of information and users should have the option of customized privacy settings. Having a **newsfeed feature** with all the above-mentioned services is necessary for a social media although some users might not use it.

I like to create my own feed by adding groups, news, pages, themes, and the music of my interest in VK which lets me scroll down and see what I want to see. (Participant 1, group A)

Interaction with other people, this is the main thing, I can communicate with other people and I can know about other people. (Participant 2, group A)

I can use Instagram just to look at some person's life it's very useful to observe of somebody. It gives a lot of information. Some spying, so that's all. (Participant 1, group E)

A competitive new way to connect publicly with others in social media is so-called Story, which is a full-screen post (picture or short video) with a certain expiry period (typically for 24 hours). Stories are getting more and more popular in Instagram as most of them are not saved in the user's profile for a later visit and

there is no option to give likes (only a list of people who have seen the story), which gives users more freedom to share more from their daily life compared to the newsfeed. It is also possible to watch stories one, by one like a short video or tap on the phone screen, fast and comfortably compared to the newsfeed. As a result, users get more views, which encourages them to post more stories. A **Full-screen post feature** with an editable published time limit feature with an option to see the viewers can be useful for a social media.

Usually, there are people who just post pictures and if you check Instagram stories you can see what your friends are doing and reply them. (Participant 4, group D)

If you have lots of people you follow and we do not really check Instagram feed and sometimes bloggers post a story like "I have a new post and you can check it in profile" you just press on a profile and see it, so you do not have to scroll down like to find it. (Participant 4, group D)

Participants were interested to edit their photos before posting by using different effects, funny masks, and filters. These functions were one of the reasons which made Instagram a favorite for some participants and as they mentioned edited photos on Instagram were better than on Facebook or WhatsApp, for example, because in Instagram there are a lot of people who love photography and uploading them and filtering them. A **Photo editing feature** including different funny effects, funny masks, filters, and themes, for instance, is necessary for a social media to keep users interested and interacting with the site.

Snapchat is awesome. In Snapchat, you have a better mask. (Participant 4, group B)

I like the mask on Instagram, they are funny and filters also they can make the picture better. (Participant 2, group B)

I think Instagram is the most favorite application that I use every day. Because Instagram has a function, that I can filter photos and especially it gets better. Photos on Instagram are better than Facebook, WhatsApp a lot. Because there are a lot of people who love photography uploading and filter them. (Participant 6, group E)

Availability of different news from different sources in one platform that is in one social media was a key point that one participant really liked about social media.

In addition, participants mentioned about following some pages, particularly photography related pages for nice photos because those are not easy to find in a Google search. Some participants were using social media for professional goals; for example, they can post products for sale or marketing in their professional account. Because of these reasons and many more, a **page feature** is needed on a social media site.

For example, if you want to get CNN news, you need to visit CNN website; or if you want to get BBC news, you need to go to BBC website. Nevertheless, if they have the same things on the Facebook platform, so if we follow this page then we get this news on the same platform. This is actually the main benefit of social media platform. (Participant 4, group A)

My friend is using Instagram for personal and professional goals she can post her handmade products, artistic post on her professional account and post pictures about her personal life in her personal account. (Participant 5, group B)

Participants liked social media because they can check locations by using a search feature while planning a trip to somewhere. They also search something of their interest, for example cooking recipes. Moreover, a **search feature** was used on different social media including Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest, which proves that it can be a useful feature for any social media.

I like Instagram because I can check locations because if I'm planning a trip to somewhere I can easily check if it's good or not and see nice pictures. (Participant 1, group D)

It's very fast to search something, on Pinterest. You can find describing pictures, for example in specific topics you can find a lot of bloggers who post pictures with a post about everything, for examples traveling, recipes etc. and you can just subscribe it and see updates. (Participant 4, group D)

One more way of a fixed search in Instagram is to explore pages displaying different interesting posts from different unknown users without searching for anything specific. Some participants were more interested in exploring a page compared to a newsfeed because it has an endless stream of information. When something happens around the world, participants know it before it is in the news because users post recent news on social media faster than news companies. These different users' posts from different parts of the world come to the explore

page. It is important for any social media to have an **explore feature**, which can provide useful information from different unknown users and pages.

Instagram's explore page is my favorite because it has an endless stream of information. I am not that much interested in feed. (Participant 3, group A)

The most interesting thing in Instagram is when something happens around the world you will know it. Even it is not yet in the news but you will know it. (Participant 1, group B)

Some participants also liked the function of video on Instagram because they wanted to promote themselves to their potential customers. One participant was working online with music and used mass following of potential customers and partners by making work-related videos. He shared them on Instagram for others to see what he is doing and to get customers. Participants were using Instagram as a business platform and, of course, for fun too. Some participants emphasized on live video because they wanted to record at a time when they wanted to show to others what they were doing. Those videos are normally saved in the newsfeed for later views too. A compact **video uploading feature and live video feature** can attract new users to the site.

It is all about live stream. Because like every people can record at the time they want to show to every people on their friend list. It is quite a nice feature on social media now. (Participant 4, group E)

I really like the function of video in Instagram. Because I can promote myself to my potential customers. I am working online with music so I just use mass following way on potential customers and on people who also make music. When I add some videos on Instagram, I can make them see what I am doing and maybe some people would like to buy what I am doing. It is kind of business platform for me and of course for fun. It is very cool to post photos and so on. (Participant 4, group B)

Most of the participants were willing to share a lot of information on social media but some of them wanted to share content only with their friends and family. They wanted to make the post private and allow just their social media friends to see their pictures for example. Privacy is something which every social media has to consider seriously nowadays. A **customized privacy feature** can be a solution for all users, granting them the freedom to share everything with their chosen audience.

Making my post private compared to the other features. I can allow just my friends to see my pictures etc. (Participant 1, group B)

Basically, I like to share everything but I also consider about privacy. (Participant 2, group B)

Participants mentioned that they like Instagram's interface because they can quickly switch accounts within a few seconds, which is very convenient, and it is intuitive. Participants also liked when there is a good clear app interface which is easy to use. The app's interface is the first place where users visit, so it must be clear for users. A **simple interface** is needed for every application to keep the users interested in the app, and it should eventually help to bring in more users.

From a professional point of view, I really like Instagram; you can quickly switch your accounts within in few seconds which is very convenient. (Participant 5, group B)

When there is a good clear app interface and easy to use. (Participant 3, group C)

Participants were using social media because they had many international friends, and they just talk to them time to time through Facebook or some other social media used by people of different nationalities. Participants were using social media because there were other multinational people using it. A relatively new social media with fewer users must try to bring in new users from different parts of the world, which will eventually help it to become a global site, which can be done through **global marketing**.

Basically, the float, intuitiveness and we use social media is because other people are there. (Participant 3, group B)

Now it is like because I have many international friends in Portugal, Germany, and France and I just talk to them time to time through Facebook. (Participant 3, group E)

A participant was using Facebook to find nearby events. An **event feature** is useful for every social media as it encourages new users to join the site to keep themselves updated.

LTKY organize some events and they mostly post it on Facebook, so it is a good way to know. (Participant 3, group E)

To sum up the above analysis, product development ideas for social media are instant messaging, customized newsfeed, full-screen post, photo editing tools, page option, search, explore, video uploading, live video, customized privacy, simple interface, global marketing and event feature.

5.3 Unpopular features of social media

The third focus group script question “What aspects do you dislike about social media?” was planned to find out current negative sides of the social media industry, unpopular features and services and the probable reasons for this and the solutions to provide Glostars with valuable information and ideas. Many participants disliked advertisements and did not want to see them at all on social media. Some of them did not want to see too many advertisements in unwanted places and said it is ok if the advertisement had a nice offer which they wanted to see. Moreover, one participant suggested that a social media should pay a small sum of money to the audience if they wanted to advertise on their profile. Overall, it can be said the participants disliked unwanted advertisements. A **new type of advertising** is needed for social media, which can provide more value to the users than typical advertisements.

Too many advertisements in unwanted places. Sometimes it's useful when I can find nice offers which I want to see. (Participant 3, group A)

Ads are ruining every application. (Participant 3, group B)

All these unnecessary advertisements going on which are not my interest. (Participant 2, group C)

I do not like lots of advertisement in Instagram, in FB, in Twitter. (Participant 1, group D)

I think its border to me, like Facebook in that separate area for ads and we look on them. I think if these companies want to advertise there they should pay a share to the audience too. (Participant 5, group E)

Most of the participants did not want to see something unrelated entering their newsfeed. Participants did not like to see unnecessary information such secondary information which was liked by their friends on social media. They also did not like to scroll down to their newsfeed and see posts from previous days coming

on top of the feed before new posts. Moreover, one participant mentioned that friends expect you to share everything on social media, and another participant agreed on that and labeled it as “killing valuable time”. These problems are happening because of rotating newsfeed, which will change every time users refresh the newsfeed page. By this, they try to show something different, which is unrelated most of the time, to keep the users for a longer time in their social media ecosystem. One solution to this problem is to implement **newsfeed by a timeline**, which will show friends’ posts in a most recent chronological order and will not show anything more than feed posted by friends.

Random people posting some other things all the time which are coming to my feed. (Participant 2, group C)

Facebook is too much complicated for a VK user. Every time I open it I see unnecessary things which my friends liked but those are not my interest. (Participant 2, group A)

I do not like on Instagram that you scroll feed and see posts like from 3 or 5 days ago. (Participant 1, group D)

Facebook and Instagram are time-consuming and too addictive sometimes. It is good to know what is going on around the world but it takes too much time in current social media. It would be good if I could use only that much time which I intended to use not too much more than that. (Participant 2, group C)

The tendency to show-off and the constant decrease in meeting and interacting face to face was pointed out as a downside of social media. Participants mentioned there were people following them in social media for marketing or an unwanted reason, which is disturbing. Moreover, people buying fake followers on social media and spread fake news by following people with fake profiles. This fact was pointed out as a concern. Overall, these problems can be solved by introducing a **customized follow feature**, when the user will be able to share private contents with mutual followers. Public contents will be shared for everyone. The user will have the right to choose his followers in the public or mutual category and block anyone to see any post.

Sometimes there are some people follow you hard to recognize. (Participant 2, group D)

It's some kind of advertisement, public pages follow you first, like mass following and if you do not follow them they will unfollow you

and always get notifications and they are annoying. (Participant 4, group D)

I do not like when people buy followers in social media which should be blocked by the system if possible. (Participant 1, group B)

Sometimes some kinds of fake news or hoax, which is not good and even it makes the society in a volatile situation. (Participant 1, group A)

Some participants did not like paid features in social media; for example, they must pay for music or videos, otherwise, they are forced to watch an advertisement. Availability of social media made users demand high and **no paid features** in social media, which maybe the way to go for next generation, as participants suggested.

I do not like paid features on social media. For example, I have to pay for music all the time now or watch too many ads. (Participant 4, group C)

I do not know, usually social media only make something worse than better, because of some restrictions on free music, some restrictions on videos. (Participant 2, group E)

One of the participants did not like many notifications from different social media and mentioned he hated them. On the other hand, another participant from a different group mentioned that he is not getting enough event-related notifications to see if there is something going on nearby. A solution to this contradictory situation can be a **customized notification feature**, when the user will have the right to choose what kind of notifications they want to get and only important notifications will be sent to users by default.

I do not like a lot of notifications from Instagram, WhatsApp. There lots of them and I hate them. (Participant 2, group D)

Even before in Facebook there were birthday's people you see on your main screen/main page but right now it's impossible to see if they are going on events and now you did not get a notification. (Participant 3, group D)

One participant did not like that Facebook has allowed posting a limited amount of story per day. However, another participant commented that eventually every user becomes used to the changes in popular social media like Instagram. One more participant mentioned that there is not so much to develop in social media

in general, but the range of services could be better. Overall, it can be said that an **unlimited number of posts** can be a way to go for every social media as it can satisfy almost all users.

The most function that I can post a story. In Facebook limitation story amount per day. (Participant 1, group E)

I hated the story feature in Instagram when it was launched but it seems that eventually slowly everyone gets used to it. (Participant 4, group A)

I think that there is not so much to develop in social media in general, but of course it could be you know like the range to be better. (Participant 3, group E)

A new type of advertising, newsfeed by timeline, customized follow feature, no paid features, customized notification feature and an unlimited number of posts are some of the key points that came out from the above discussion.

5.4 New features for the future

The fourth focus group script question was “What new things (services/features) in social media you would like to see in future? (For example, new privacy settings, photo or video buy and sell)”. The aim was to get new ideas which may give more fun and value to the users. When asked this question, participants took a while to come up with ideas. One of the participants from group B mentioned that advanced photo editing tools could be useful for some users. However, another participant from the same group emphasized on better basic editing tools which would be easy to use and easy to learn for users to make their content look better, and said that advanced editing tools might be too complicated for the general user. He also mentioned about multiple hashtag feature, which other participants from the same group agreed on. Overall, it can be said that basic **photo-editing feature and multiple hashtag feature** can make social media more interesting for users.

Some people might need advanced editing tools. (Participant 1, group B)

Multiple hashtags and better basic editing tools which are easy to use and easy to learn how to use them to make their content look better. (Participant 3, group B)

A couple of participants mentioned about the need for video editing feature in Instagram. They needed to edit videos on the computer, then upload on the phone and then upload in Instagram, which is time-consuming and uncomfortable. Participants wanted to edit videos on the phone while uploading and wanted to add some short soundtrack to it, for example, use five pictures, make a video, and add a short melody there. They also wanted to have different sample music in the social media by default for users. **Video editing features** in social media catering for all the different requirements are currently non-existing in the market and can be a valuable feature to implement in future.

I really want on Instagram some more flexible redactor. For me, I need to edit videos on my computer then upload to phone and then upload in Instagram. I really would like to do everything on my phone. For example, I take a picture in Photoshop or in any redactor and I want to add some audio files to it without using a computer. It will make work a little bit faster and more comfortable. (Participant 4, group B)

And of course, more flexible video redactor. It's not hard to do it and sometimes all people want to edit their videos before uploading. (Participant 4, group B)

Some easy video editor will be nice. For me, it would be good if people could add some short sound tracts, for example, use five pictures and there is a short melody probably. It should be customers own music. There should be already 100 different sample music for use. (Participant 5, group B)

One of the most interesting and non-existing features in the market currently came out from one participant from group B who wanted to draw something on his friend's social media post by just pressing on top of the picture and drawing something or writing text which might be delivered by private message or shown in some other way. This feature should make a social media application more interactive and was named by the author as a **hold and draw feature**.

For me, it would be funny and good if I could draw something on someone's picture by just pressing on top of the picture and drawing something or writing text which should be delivered by private message. This feature should make app interactive. (Participant 5, group B)

An interesting idea for an instant messaging feature was editing or deleting the message you are sending to others. Moreover, one participant wanted to talk with

random people sharing the same interest, which can be done by adding a chat room by interest. One more participant wanted to see a group calling option in messenger. Overall, combining all their ideas to an **instant messaging feature** can help to gain the potential advantage in the market.

For Instagram or Facebook, when you chat with someone you can edit or delete your sentences. (Participant 4, group A)

Talking to random people who have the same interest as me will be useful and fun. (Participant 2, group C)

I would like to see group calling option in messenger. (Participant 2, group C)

Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp and not Instagram. It does not have stickers, attachments. Attachments are most important things. In the messenger we have quite a lot of function. Ok, you just chat and upload your photo. (Participant 6, group E)

One participant said that it would be nice to have transaction scope through social media, as it is not possible currently. Then companies could open their online store on a common social media platform. People could purchase from company pages or advertisements and they would not need to go to any bank or payment gateway but rather than pay directly through that social media **transaction feature**.

Now it's not possible to do any kind of transaction in social media; so, any company they can do their online store on a common platform. So that I can purchase from their pages or advertisement so that I do not need to go to any bank or payment gateway. Can be easily done through Facebook. (Participant 1, group A)

Privacy was another topic of discussion raised by a participant. He wanted to control his social media activity. As a bad side of Facebook, the system of adding to different groups without permission was pointed out. Both of these privacy problems could be solved by a **customized privacy feature** where every user will have full rights on their social media activity. Before showing anything to an unknown user or before adding a user to a group, user permission will be needed.

You can control who sees what; what you publish or like. Because when I like other page or events everyone can see. (Participant 2, group A).

Anyone can add you to any group, and there are some fake groups; you cannot control it, you cannot avoid it. Even Facebook still does not have a solution for this. (Participant 3, group A)

An advanced searching option was another idea that one participant suggested. She wanted to search by name, location, or image for example, which is part of the advanced **search feature**.

Advanced search option with name, location or even image. (Participant 5, group A)

One participant mentioned that a **simple interface** is a way to go and keeping the app clean and easy to use will attract more people to use it. However, one participant said he is open to innovation and willing to try out something imaginary if companies are able to provide any.

The simplest interface is the best solution to attract some people. More it understandable-more people like to use it. (Participant 1, group E)

I am open to new innovation and willing to try out something imaginary. (Participant 1, group C)

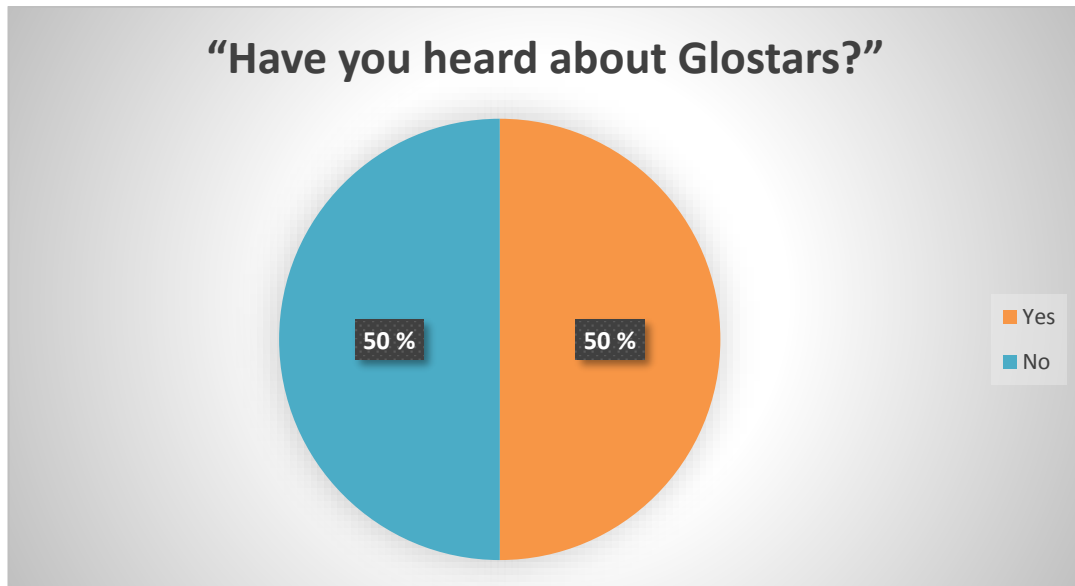
To sum up the above analysis, product development ideas for social media including photo editing feature, multiple hashtag feature, video editing feature, hold and draw feature, instant messaging feature, transaction feature, customized privacy feature, search feature, and simple interface.

5.5 Brand awareness of Glostars

The fifth question was “Have you heard about Glostars?”. This was asked to understand participants’ previous knowledge about Glostars. Everyone knew about Glostars in group A and group B, except one participant in each group. Moreover, not all participants in group D knew about Glostars. However, there were IOS users and could not use Glostars properly on the phone because of lack of an IOS application by Glostars. Glostars must bring an IOS application into the market to increase its users and popularity. Unfortunately, no one knew about Glostars from group C and group E.

I am using Glostars through its website. (Participant 5, group B)

Here everyone knows about Glostars but we all use IOS phone. (Participant 4, group D)



Graph 2. Percentage of people who had heard about Glostars

Overall, out of the total of 26 participants only a half had heard about Glostars, which shows lack of marketing effectiveness by this company. Glostars should put more effort into marketing to be a global company in future.

After this question, the mentor showed the newly launched Glostars android App on his phone and explained briefly the current idea to all participants.

5.6 New features for Glostars

After every participant got a general idea of Glostars App, the mentor asked the sixth question "What new things (services/features) and changes in Glostars you would like to see in future? [What are the new features Glostars should develop?]" to get new ideas which are directly provided for Glostars' development in future. Most of the participants gave positive feedback and ideas about Glostars' existing competition feature, which is unique in social media. They appreciated giving prizes to the users for posting a picture in a competition. One participant mentioned he is not that much interested in posting pictures on other social media because he does not get anything out of those posts. Participants suggested making the Glostars photo competition fair for all users. They pointed out that with more users in Glostars it will be a one-sided competition and users who have

more followers will win prizes all the time. To avoid that, it is important to make competition pictures anonymous so that no user will have an extra advantage and the competition will be equal for all users. Moreover, a couple more participants pointed out that it is not fair that all the different category pictures come together. They said there should be an option where they could choose a favorite category, see those pictures first, and rate them at the same time. Another idea related to this was to divide the competition into different photo categories, which would be fairer and more motivating for users. One participant mentioned that having one star instead of five for competition pictures would make things easy for users. Overall, a **fair competition feature** in Glostars is needed and can be achieved by making competition pictures anonymous, choosing a favorite category, dividing competition into different photo categories and having one star instead of five.

Giving prizes to the users is a good motivation to post a picture in the competition which I really like. I do not post that many pictures in social media because I do not get anything out of those posts. (Participant 4, group A)

For the beginning giving prizes was a perfect variance but when there will be more customers it will be too hard competition and people who have more followers will win prizes all the time. It's important to make competition picture anonymous that people will not have an extra advantage and competition will be fair for everyone. (Participant 5, group B)

It's not fair that all the different category pictures come together. There should be an option where I could choose my favorite category and see those pictures first and rate that category picture. (Participant 2, group A)

Some participants wanted more options to post all kinds of creative work, including artwork, music, videos, and hashtags, in Glostars, which could make the newsfeed much more interesting. These options must be short, as another participant did not want to see anything too time-consuming for example Instagram's max one-minute posts. Moreover, he mentioned that time-consuming posts might bore people easily. On the other hand, one participant wanted to see Glostars as a platform just for photos and wanted to participate in the photo exhibition event. Moreover, one participant wanted to ensure good quality while posting in Glostars, which requires a bit bigger size picture to post. To conclude, options to

post all kinds of good quality creative work like artwork, music, videos, and hashtags, in Glostars can be summarized as a **posting creative contents feature**, which might be applied in future if needed.

I want more options to post all kinds of creative work like artwork, music etc. which will make your newsfeed much more interesting. (Participant 3, group B)

People do not want to see anything for too long time nowadays and Instagram's max one minute everything goes with that is what I like. People should not be easily bored. (Participant 1, group C)

You can do it now I like a platform just for photos and if you have some exhibitions and event I can check it and participate. (Participant 2, group D)

While posting the picture I would like to ensure good quality which requires posting bit bigger size picture. (Participant 6, group E)

Many participants said that a sell and buy pictures or contents option in Glostars would be useful as no other social media is giving this opportunity to users. They said that a company might need pictures and they would buy them from random Glostars users. They also wanted the possibility for the user to name the price, change the price and discuss the price with the customer in person. They were willing to pay Glostars a small percentage for the deal. Hiring a photographer should be a part of this system as participants recommended. Moreover, they wanted the payment to be possible by cryptocurrency and Glostars to have only these sales commissions as the earning source, not advertisements. Overall, a **sell and buy feature** can be very useful to attract new users and to generate new revenue sources.

Sell and buy content option would be useful. There should be a possibility for the artist to name the price change the price and discuss the price with the customer in private message. The company can have a small percentage of the deal. (Participant 3, group B)

Selling photos in social media will be the best option for Glostars to take. For example, some company will need pictures and they will buy it from random social media users. (Participant 5, group C)

Only earning by getting a commission, sell and buy, hiring photographer. (Participant 3, group E)

Payment should be possible through cryptocurrency. (Participant 3, group B)

Some of the participants emphasized the possibility to do some painting on photos and to edit and comment on photos which their social media friends have posted. They wanted some more sensitivity on the picture and to do something there fast. They said it would be much more effective than commenting below because there might be many comments already. This **hold and draw feature** will keep the Glostars' user community active and can help to attract more users in future.

If it would be possible to do some painting on photos and do editing would be beneficial. (Participant 1, group C)

I would like to comment on the photo to specify something and the owner can see it after tapping on the photo. I mean I want some more sensitivity to the picture and do something there fast. It will be much more effective than commenting below because there might be already many comments. (Participant 4, group E)

Participants wanted to have an event feature on the main screen of Glostars as a calendar, which could help people to see what is happening around. This feature could be used for announcing new competitions, exhibitions and many more. Participants wanted to get notifications of the events happening around to check if there is something interesting going on. An **event feature** currently exists in different social media but not in the popular photo related social media, which is an advantage Glostars should take in future.

Are there any events? Maybe if you have events people could see on the main screen and see what happens. (Participant 1, group D)

I'll support my idea about events, because like it's really good, you are doing events like expeditions and something you can announce about a new competition or something like this. Make kind of calendar, if you make something so people can get a notification on a mobile phone and check if there is something new. (Participant 4, group D)

Participants wanted to have a live video feature to do something online and invite others to see what they are doing. This **live video feature** currently exists on almost all the popular social media, and Glostars should adopt it after building other uncommon features.

You can also add online live video chat like you do something, invite people and they are already in chat. (Participant 4, group D)

Posting video is really necessary and if possible live video. (Participant 6, group E)

A couple of users suggested to have an encrypted **instant messaging feature** in Glostars including all facilities as privacy still is an on top issue.

To have encrypted messaging system as still privacy is an on top issue nowadays. (Participant 3, group B)

Usually, right now people do online chat there, like if you need to answer right away, not like in emails. (Participant 3, group D)

Participants gave feedback about the Glostars android app telling it needs to have a more detailed description about “how to use and what is in it?” in the application as users are not interested to check the Glostars website or google these days. Glostars must update its description in detail inside the application (**app description**) to make it comfortable for users.

For people, I think it's easier not to check websites and it's better to check all info in the app. (Participant 3, group D)

To specify more description in the application, because sometimes people are so lazy to go to google and check like "how to use Glostars?". (Participant 3, group D)

Many participants told that Glostars must put effort on marketing to attract a good number of users fast to the site because it is all about getting more users on board. They suggested Glostars to post some company news, lessons on how to make photos, tips about how they can edit their photos better, or everyday tips, for example, as ways of creative marketing. These tips might help users to practice at home and later participate in a Glostars competition. Overall, Glostars need **global marketing** to be a popular site in the near future.

I think in social media it's important to have a good amount of user's fast because it's all about getting more people on. (Participant 2, group C)

Maybe some news from Glostars, what's going on, maybe you can post something. (Participant 1, group D)

Maybe add some lessons. Tips, how to take photos, how they can edit their photos like everyday tips. Maybe they will see all these tips

then practicing and participating in competition and exhibition. (Participant 4, group D)

A couple of participants thought Glostars needed a special creative idea because Instagram which is a quite similar application, is a well-developed company in the market. Moreover, Glostars wants to promote their app in a market where advertising is not enough. To find out an idea that is more creative, Glostars must do more **market research** on potential users and generate some fresh features in the coming days.

I think the company needs a creative idea because we have already Instagram, the very same platform with not so many difference and the company want to promote their app in the market. I think advertisement is not enough. (Participant 2, group E)

Once the community is formed you can add on features based on customer demand. (Participant 1, group C)

In summary, a fair competition feature, posting creative contents feature, sell and buy feature, hold and draw feature, event feature, live video feature, instant messaging feature, app description, global marketing and market research could help Glostars to grow in the market.

5.7 Immediately needed features in Glostars

The seventh focus group script question “Which thing (service/feature) Glostars should develop next?” was designed to find out the most needed feature for Glostars suggested by the participants to be developed in the near future. Many participants did not answer this question, as they could not come up with an idea or feature Glostars should develop next. Moreover, some participants said that whatever they had answered to the previous questions included everything and any feature out of those suggestions would be useful for Glostars to implement in the coming days. Most of the participants suggested working on the Glostars existing features and interface. One participant wanted to see a better **newsfeed feature** in Glostars by adding filter option, as he would like to see specific content in his feed.

It would be nice to have filtered feed to get more customized content which I would like to see. (Participant 1, group B)

Moreover, a couple of participants wanted Glostars to make a more user-friendly **simple interface** by adding buttons in a traditional way rather than putting buttons in the corner of the app and changing the color of the app to a bit lighter color as the current purple color is slightly bright. Advertisements in both the Glostars application and website were criticized, which proves that a **new type of advertising** or different revenue sources are needed as soon as possible.

Buttons in the corner of the app are uncomfortable and would like to see it in a traditional way. (Participant 4, group B)

I would like to see Glostars redesign interface in recent times. Purple is good color but a bit mellow would be nice. Less advertisement would be nice. No ads on website otherwise look bad. (Participant 2, group B)

A couple of participants wanted Glostars to focus on its core value, which is the competition feature and make it fair for everyone by adding anonymous competition system in Glostars. An anonymous competition page will ensure that people are getting votes only based on their content, which provides a **Fair competition feature**.

It should focus on its core value which is this competition feature and make sure that is 100% fair. (Participant 2, group A)

I would like to see anonymous competition system in Glostars. (Participant 5, group B)

An **explore feature** is useful to see what others are doing, and some users do not want to see the newsfeed all the time, mentioned by a couple of participants.

Explore page trending page to see what others are doing. (Participant 3, group A)

A discovery like Instagram is really needed, as not everyone want to see newsfeed all the time. (Participant 5, group E)

Participants wanted to see a **sell and buy feature** in Glostars soon when buyers would be able to contact a seller if they like their contents or would be able to send a request for specific photos to the seller.

Buyers would send a request for specific photos and seller would offer photos in Marketplace. (Participant 4, group A)

I would like to sell picture through here and buyers should be able to contact me if they like my picture. (Participant 6, group E)

A couple of participants suggested Glostars to start with the encrypted **instant messaging feature** as users would be able to chat and share their thoughts with others by using this system.

In every social media messaging should be possible and should be encrypted. (Participant 3, group B)

Chatting, the adjustable profile can be the next features. (Participant 4, group E)

As Glostars is related to photography, **connecting to other social media** like Facebook and Instagram was one suggestion raised by a participant.

Because for example if I do not know about this app, and my friends put something on this app on their Instagram then it is like an advertisement for you. (Participant 1, group A)

As a motivational aspect to use the app, one participant suggested adding a **video uploading feature**.

Videos will be good option to build next. (Participant 5, group C)

To sum up, the above product development ideas for social media include news-feed feature, simple interface, a new type of advertising, fair competition feature, explore feature, sell and buy feature, instant messaging feature, connecting to other social media and video uploading feature.

5.8 Summary of analysis

There were many product development ideas which came out from the research. Many of these ideas are unique but some of them already exist in Glostars. **An unlimited number of posts** is one of the ideas, which already exists in most of the social media as well as Glostars. Some participants gave feedback about Glostars android app that it needs to have a more detailed description to make it easy to use for new users. Glostars already updated its description in detail inside the application (**app description**) to make it comfortable for users. Some participants think Glostars need a special creative idea to promote their app in the

market as advertising is not enough. Glostars is doing continuous **market research** on potential users to find out a more special creative idea to be up-to-date in the market. Table 3 below summarizes all the product ideas which came out through this current research.

Idea	Frequency	Market availability
Search & explore feature	9	Existent
Photo editing feature	7	Existent
Page feature	5	Existent
Event feature	4	Existent
Instant messaging feature	22	Existent
Simple interface	9	Partly-existent
Newsfeed feature	15	Partly-existent
Customized privacy feature	4	Partly-existent
Customized notification feature	2	Partly-existent
Posting creative contents feature	5	Partly-existent
Video features	13	Partly-existent
Gaming feature	2	Partly-existent
Global marketing	10	Partly-existent
Fair competition feature	15	Non-existent
Customized follow feature	4	Non-existent
Hold and draw feature	4	Non-existent
Sell and buy feature	8	Non-existent
Transaction feature	1	Non-existent
New type of advertising	10	Non-existent

Table 3. Response frequencies and current market availability of ideas

The findings regarding new product ideas can be grouped into three categories: existent, partly-existent and non-existent features in the market. The table above highlights the findings and highlight them as per the above three categories, and their description is provided below.

5.8.1 Existent features

All the features described below are available in the market through different social media. As these features already exist, it is wiser as a new social media, to avoid developing these features. These features lack market differentiation even though an already grown social media might develop these features to increase its number of features and offer more services to customers.

Search & explore feature

Search feature might be useful for users because they can check locations while planning a trip to somewhere. The user also should be able to search something by name, location, image, or multiple hashtags, of their interest. It is possible to combine the search feature with the exploring feature, when the app it will show by default a page, when tapping on the search button where different interesting posts from different unknown users are shown without searching for anything specific yet. As a result, this page will have an endless stream of useful information and news from around the world.

Photo editing feature

Many participants emphasized on a photo editing feature which should include different funny effects, funny masks, filters, or themes, for example. It is necessary for a social media to keep users interested and interacting with the site. This feature should be easy to use and easy to learn for users to make their content look better.

Page feature

Page feature in social media can encourage companies and personal users to do blogging about different interests like news, traveling or cooking or post products for selling or marketing. Users are interested to follow different pages, particularly photography related pages for nice photos because those are not easy to find in Google search.

Event feature

Some users want to have an event feature on the main screen as a calendar, which could help users to see what is happening around. This feature could be used for announcing a new competition round, an exhibition, and events by Glostars. Notifications of the events happening around should be sent to users to help them to find if there is something interesting going on. An event feature does not exist in photo-related social media, which is an advantage Glostars should take.

Instant messaging feature

An easy to use and free of cost encrypted instant messaging feature created with lots of convenient options help users to connect easily. This feature could include individual chat, group chat, voice messages, individual audio and video call, group audio and video call, sending pictures and files, seeing messages read or not, editing or deleting sent messages, chat room by interest for the random user for example. It is an important feature for all the social media and should be developed while keeping privacy in mind, which should help to gain popularity in the market.

5.8.2 Partly-existent features

All the features below are partly available in the market. It might be that one feature is partly available over different social media nevertheless the complete feature is missing. As a new social, it is profitable to develop these features if there are no non-existent features available currently to develop. These features should fulfill market needs might be developed by an already grown social media before non-existent features to increase its number of features and make it compact for users.

Simple interface

A simple interface is needed for every application to keep the users interested in the app, which eventually should help to bring in more users. An easy to use app interface should combine all cool features on the market, should have the possibility to switch accounts quickly and should be efficient by saving time while using.

Glostars can make its interface better by adding buttons in a traditional way rather than putting buttons in the corner of the app and changing the color of the app to a bit lighter color as current purple color is a bit strong. Moreover, users are open to innovation and willing to try out something imaginary if companies can provide it.

Newsfeed feature

The newsfeed is a popular service, which users use to connect with their friends, family and even unknown people mostly publicly. Users want to create their own newsfeed by following groups, news, pages, themes, music and post something and see what others post. Newsfeed gives a lot of information and users should have the option to customize privacy by a filter option. Information about what is liked by the user's friends on feed and rotating feed, which will change every time the user refreshes the newsfeed page, is not enjoyed by most users. Newsfeed by a timeline, which will show friends and pages post in a most recent chronological order should be implemented to keep users interested.

Customized privacy feature

Some users want to share content only with their friends and family. They want to make the post private and allow just their social media friends to see their pictures for example. Privacy is something which every social media must consider seriously nowadays. A customized privacy feature requires the user's permission needed before showing anything to an unknown user, or before adding a user to a group for instance.

Customized notification feature

Some social media users like plenty of notifications but others don't. The solution to this contradictory situation can be a customized notification feature when the user will have the right to choose what kind of notification they want to receive. They will be able to enable notifications if needed and disable notifications of events which are not interesting for the user. Only important notifications about the use or update of the system should be sent to users by default.

Posting creative contents feature

Options to post all kinds of creative work like artwork, music or videos can make newsfeed much more interesting. All these creative contents must be short, approximately maximum 90 seconds, as some users do not want to see anything too time-consuming which might bore them easily. Moreover, some users prefer an only good quality photo related site, which requires a bit bigger size pictures to post, and wants more services such as photo exhibition events. Overall, it is up to the company to decide which contents they want to be known for in the market and the options are all kinds of good quality creative work.

Video features

A video uploading feature, live video feature and video editing feature might be good options to have on a social media. Videos should have a smart search option to provide suggestions about related videos. Some users are interested to use social media as a business platform and short videos can help them to promote products to their potential customers. Live video streaming and recording at the same time when users want to show others what they are doing. Users should be able to invite others to watch their live video streaming too. A video uploading feature and live video streaming feature currently exist in almost all the popular social media, which Glostars should adopt after building other uncommon features. Editing on the phone and add some short soundtrack to it can be useful while live video streaming and uploading videos. For example, by using five pictures to make a short video and add melody there which should be provided in the social media by default. Video editing features in social media including all these different requirements are currently non-existing in the market and can be a valuable feature to implement in future.

Gaming feature

A gaming feature in social media for adding online gaming, streaming, cluster gaming and getting money out of those can be a huge advantage in the market. The gaming feature might be integrated into a social media from external online gaming companies.

Global marketing

A multinational audience in social media automatically helps to expand the market. Users will be interested to use a specific social media if there are other multinational users already. Only half of the research participants had heard about Glostars, which shows lack of marketing effectiveness. Glostars must put effort in marketing to have a good number of users' fast in the site because it is all about getting more users on board by creative marketing such as posting company news, lessons on how to make photos, tips about how users can edit their photos better, or everyday tips. These tips might help users to practice at home and later participate in a Glostars competition. Glostars also can connect to other popular social media to get more visibility.

5.8.3 Non-existent features

These features below are currently not yet available on the market. For a new social media, it is most profitable to develop these features, as they will bring market differentiation. These features will fulfill market needs and will give a new social media the best chance to grow in the market.

Fair competition feature

Glostars' existing competition feature is unique in social media. Giving prizes to the users for posting a picture in a competition encourages creativity. The competition feature can be more upgraded by making the post anonymous and showing it in full screen when users will be able to watch pictures one by one like a short video or tap on the phone screen to browse fast and comfortably compared to newsfeed, so the competition will be equal for all users. Moreover, users should be able to choose their favorite category and see those pictures first, compare and rate them at the same time. Dividing the competition into different photo categories could be useful too. Moreover, one star instead of five for competition pictures will make things easy for users. A fair competition feature in Glostars is needed and can be achieved by making competition pictures anonymous and posting them in full screen, choosing a favorite category, dividing the competition into different photo categories and having one star instead of five.

Customized follow feature

A customized follow feature enables users to share private contents only to mutual followers and public contents to everyone. The user will have the right to choose his or her followers in a public or mutual category. Moreover, there should be an option for one user to block any other users so as not to let them see their profile and all posts.

Hold and draw feature

One of the most interesting new feature came out through this research is the hold and draw feature, when users will be able to draw, paint, edit or comment something on their friend's social media post by just pressing on top of a picture which might have been delivered by private message or shown some other way. This will create more sensitivity on the picture and users will be do something there fast. This feature should make a social media application more interactive and funny for users. By implementing a hold and draw feature, Glostars will be able to keep users engaged in community activities and can help to attract more users in future.

Sell and buy feature

A sell and buy pictures or other contents feature can be useful as no other social media is currently providing this service. Buyers should be able to buy contents from random users who should be able to name the price, change the price and discuss the price with the customer. Moreover, hiring a photographer should be a part of this system too. For these services, the social media can charge a small percentage for the deal. Payment should be possible by cryptocurrency and this sales commission can be a new earning source, better than advertisements. However, users do not like paid feature on social media but sell and buy feature should be useful as users will be able to earn by using this feature.

Transaction feature

Transaction through social media could help companies to open their online store on a common social media platform, which is not possible currently. Buyers should be able to purchase from company pages or advertisements and they

should be able to pay by the social media's own transaction feature. Hence, buyers will not need to use any bank or payment gateway but can then pay directly through that social media's transaction feature.

New type of advertising

Most of the users disliked advertisements and did not want to see those at all in social media. Some advertisements with nice offers for users only should be there only if needed. The social media could pay a small sum of money to the ad viewer. New ways of advertising in social media should provide more value to the users.

6 Discussion and conclusion

This final chapter of the thesis report begins with discussing the hypothesis and results. The assumption which was made earlier is presented briefly including the outcomes of this study. Moreover, this chapter covers answers to the research questions and a brief overview of the theoretical contribution of this thesis. Finally, suggestions related to the new product ideas and possibilities to further study the topic are explained.

6.1 Hypothesis and results

This thesis study was done to generate new product ideas for a social media named Glostars based on prospective users' demand. A qualitative business research method using focus groups analysis was used to generate new product ideas. Questions formulated for the discussion helped to understand in overall the social media industry's business environment, competitive situation, and customer demands. This study has also identified the products currently lacking and the user awareness of Glostars.

This thesis was built on a hypothesis, which was supported based on findings. The results show that there are many partly-existent and non-existent service ideas yet to develop within current social media to make end users satisfied with everything.

Hypothesis	Result
There are not enough services offered by current social media sites where end users are satisfied with everything.	Supported

Table 4. Summary of hypothesis test findings

The main aim of this thesis was to explore end-users' needs and expectations, which generated new product ideas for Glostars to develop its features to stay competitive in the market as a relatively new social media.

6.2 Answers to research questions

Based on the need for this thesis, the main research question was supported by sub-research questions, which were mentioned in the first chapter of this study. Here the author presents answers to those key research questions.

1. Which social media are currently used most?

Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, VK, and Snapchat has been found to be the most used social media currently based on qualitative research. Facebook has the highest number of users in social media currently including a huge amount of multinational audience.

2. What are the most significant current elements in social media?

For example, instant messaging, using newsfeed and story, photo editing, page viewing, searching, exploring, video uploading, doing live video, customizing privacy, using a simple interface to be fast, being global, and checking events have been found to be popular reasons to be in social media. Overall, the need to be connected globally has forced customers to use social media. Advertisements, rotating newsfeed, fake followers, paid features, unwanted notifications, limiting usability are among the things which are disliked about social media. The tendency to show off in social media and constant decrease in face-to-face meeting and interaction has been pointed out as a downside of social media.

3. What are the current service gaps in social media?

Better photo editing tools, video editing tools, instant drawing on the newsfeed, better instant messaging tools, transaction through social media, better privacy tools, better searching tools, and simpler interface have been found as service gaps in the social media.

4. What changes should Glostars bring to stay competitive?

Making the interface simpler, updating newsfeed, making the competition feature fairer, allowing posting more creative contents, updating the app description, doing global marketing to increase international users, and doing more market research to find revolutionary product ideas were pointed out as changes which Glostars should bring to stay competitive.

Based on the answers to the above sub-research questions, the main research question was answered.

“Which new product ideas are suitable for Glostars to develop in future?”

Considering the main research question, the author developed a timeline for implementation of these ideas.

Immediately the company should simplify the user interface and make it more attractive. In addition, privacy and preference in terms of sharing and viewing contents and notifications are very important aspects the company should address immediately. Regarding features, the competition has been a unique and attractive feature for people to join Glostars; thus, updating the competition logic in order to make it fair is a key area that the company should focus on.

In the near future (i.e. in the next six months' time) the company should enable publishing of all kind of creative contents, e.g. photos, music, and videos. This is mainly because a high level of social media contents are now turning into music and videos as they make the contents more lively and increase interaction. In connection with the need of increasing interaction, introducing instant chatting is something the company should offer to its users very soon. However, chatting is

already a matured industry so, people will not be diverted because of chatting system yet it is quite necessary to have in modern social media.

To survive and grow in this competitive field of social media the company needs to constantly bring new features or services for the users. In addition, based on the ideas generated through this study, the author grouped some ideas for long-term implementation (i.e. within the next one year). The company should introduce a buy and sell contents feature, different content editing tools, creating virtual events and following the events. These are some of the key highlights from the findings that the company should work on.

6.3 Theoretical contribution

The application of some technique or method that concerns each person's reality to generate ideas that are newer was prered by the case company. Gathering people into groups and creating conditions for spontaneous expression for each participant, and assisting the interaction of everybody, can facilitate idea generation. The authors followed the Focus Group (FG) qualitative research method (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins, & Popjoy 1998, p. 2). Moreover, collecting primary data in focus group discussions worked well for this research as group sizes were 4-6 participants and discussions took a maximum one-hour time, which ensured participants were not tired in the discussion. Because of those reasons, participants were spontaneous most of the time and conversations were moving forward well.

6.4 Managerial implications and suggestions for further research

Social media is a booming industry that brings new aspects and dimensions into our everyday life. Despite the existence of dominant players in the market, there is scope for bringing new ideas to create a niche for a new entrant. The author of this study has paved the way for Glostars to introduce new ideas or modify the existing ideas to build its own market. Based on the market findings and discussions with the company management to understand the resource capabilities, the author would recommend to fine tune the core values which Glostars already offers according to the market needs. Making the photo competition more attractive and fair by making it anonymous would be the priority task for the company.

Alongside this, the company also needs to work on the user interface to make it easy to use yet trendy. Subsequently, to increase user interaction bringing fun elements like a hold and draw feature on others' posts can be a good addition to the platform. Though there is a demand for an instant chatting system, which this study revealed found out, there is a need for deeper research to find out what gaps are existing in the current messaging system. There are many chatting platforms in the market, and this research did not categorically focus on any particular feature. Therefore, this needs to be studied further before developing the chatting system. Among other non-existent features, many participants recommended a buy and sell. This is a major feature and the company needs to develop a proper business model to fight the existing players in this particular market. Nevertheless, another modification, which might not be that complicated for the company, is to work on the customized follow feature. As privacy has been a major concern globally, coming up with user-friendly privacy settings can boost user confidence and ultimately the usage of the service.

These are some of the immediate features that Glostars should focus and conduct some research to address the gaps in the best possible way. Moreover, page option and events are two of the recommended features that respondents highlighted during the discussion. However, these features already exist on different platforms, but exploring further to make these features more attractive and trendy can also significantly boost the use of Glostars. In addition, during the study it was found that a video feature is now gaining huge popularity; therefore, Glostars should integrate video upload, live streaming and a video option in near the future to stay with the trend and gain an advantage.

Apart from new ideas, a significant finding from this study was the lack of brand awareness of this company. This is a marketing challenge that the company needs to tackle effectively. Proper communication and creating market buzz is essential to gain a sizeable number of users. Therefore, analyzing the current marketing practices and building a right marketing strategy would be key to success for Glostars.

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Appendix 1. Focus group discussion script

Qualitative focus group discussion script page 1(2)

Introduction

Hello everyone, my name is Sayed Fahid Hasan. I am currently studying International Business at Saimaa University of Applied Sciences. Thanks for taking the time to join here.

Before proceeding, let us get introduced to each other. We have placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names. Let us find out some more about each other by going around the table. Please tell us your name and where do you live.

Now, why we are here? I am doing my bachelor's thesis for a company called Glostars. In addition, as a part of my thesis, I am conducting this focused group discussion to gather insights and ideas on the social media industry. The language of this discussion is English to ensure everyone understands the whole conversation and have an opportunity to participate equally. The responses will be processed anonymously and confidentially. Individual responses will not be recognized from the published results. The results of this thesis will be published in theseus.fi.

We are very much familiar with the concept of sharing contents online. Moreover, today we will discuss your experience with the different social media you use and maybe you will share some ideas what you miss in the current sites and so on.

Guidelines

Before we start, these are some of the guidelines, which we will follow during this session:

- No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view
- We're tape recording, so one person should speak at a time
- We're on a first name basis
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views
- Rules for cellular phones and pagers if applicable. For example, we ask that you turn off your phones or pagers. If you cannot and if you must respond to a call please go outside and rejoin us as quickly as you can.
- My role as moderator will be to throw the questions and guide the discussion
- Here are some refreshments for all, so feel free to have!

Questions

So, let us begin our discussion.

1. Which social media do you use? (For example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.)
2. What aspects do you like about social media?
3. What aspects do you dislike about social media?
4. What new things (services/features) in social media you would like to see in future? (For example, new privacy settings, photo or video buy and sell)
5. Have you heard about Glostars?

[At this point mentor should show the Glostars App on his phone and explain the current idea. If mentor explains, only the current service idea then participants might give some new ideas or directions.

"Glostars is a photo-sharing (social media) site with a unique rewarding system for you to win awards and take part in photo exhibitions. Competition is running constantly, prizes are given away weekly, monthly and tri-annually. At the end of each four-month period, an exhibition is organized with top 50 photos coming from all over the world. At Glostars, the community itself choose the winners by rating the participating pictures in competition.

Glostars provides you with full control on your content. Share your photos with friends, the community or take part in the competition. Your rights are highly valued at Glostars, so the ownership of the photos always stays with you".]

6. What new things (services/features) and changes in Glostars you would like to see in future? (What are the new features Glostars should develop?)
7. Which thing (service/feature) Glostars should develop next?

Ending notes

We end our session here. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation. During next couple of weeks, I will analyze the findings and if you are interested in hearing about the findings, then leave your email address here and I will send you a summary of findings once the thesis is approved and published.