

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MARKETING TOOL FOR A SMALL BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

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This Bachelor's thesis focuses on social media and utilising it as a marketing strategy for a photography entrepreneur in Tampere. Marketing theories and the concept of social media are defined in order to facilitate understanding the case in a more constructive manner. Social media platforms are introduced through literature and web materials. The purpose was to give a general guideline in marketing through various social media platforms. The objective was to gain knowledge of the more popular platforms and to investigate how social media marketing works in general. Expert interviews were conducted to obtain a better view on how marketing professional portray social media. The research problem was to find out how companies can take advantage of social media in their marketing strategies. The problem was solved in the thesis with the help of literature, interviews and a concept for a commissioned company.

The solution to the problem was identifying the key factors in how social media is used in Finland. The results were analysed and reflected in order to find out what kind of social media platforms should be used in the marketing campaign. The focus was on gaining new customers, but also on having a qualified interaction with them using different social media channels.

At the end of this thesis, a conclusion is brought forward looking at the marketing situation from different points of views. The need for making an actual plan for marketing purposes is important. Social media should not be handled in a carefree way, but to be taken more seriously like any other campaign. Customers value content that they can relate to and are interested in. On the basis of the thesis, it is possible to take key factors into account in planning a marketing campaign via different social media outlets. Although the future of social media is clear, it has nevertheless become a stable marketing choice for businesses.

Key words: Social media, marketing, social media optimization.

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1 INTRODUCTION

While social media marketing has been widely studied, there has not yet been empirical research on what kinds of benefits it has for a small photography company in Finland. The topic is chosen in the hopes of achieving more knowledge in the field of social media and marketing combined. Another reason was to hopefully work in the field and contribute to it later in a professional approach.

The thesis starts with a small but informative introduction to marketing and what it is in different perspectives. It then continues on to define core concepts inside marketing, such as the marketing mix and the four P's, while examining them in the 21st century. SWOT analysis is also defined as a base for any business to distinguish. The last chapters of the marketing theory consist of marketing strategies and how to design an efficient marketing plan.

The next main chapter starts with an introduction to the theory of social media; defining what social media is, why it is used and defining the risks but also the advantages of it. Social media will also be compared to traditional media, in the means of costs, response-time and customer service. The theory is followed by detailed descriptions on the different types of social media platforms and how they can be used.

Interviews were conducted to get a sense of how professionals in the marketing field think of social media and what their general perception of it is. The results were translated and conclusions were made based on the answers. It must be taken in to note that because of only three interviews, one can only make some generalizations of the perception of social media in the field of marketing professionals. The interviewees were chosen based on experience in the field of social media. All three participants have a vast amount of knowledge and were willing to contribute in the making of this thesis.

The study concentrates on social media and how small companies can use it for their advantage in a marketing point of view. The commissioned company is Anneli Lariviere Photography, a recently started photography company based in Tampere, Finland. The concentration is with portraits mainly dealing with families and honest moments in life. It has already established a presence on Facebook and Pinterest, but not on other

social media platforms. The photography company wanted to have some clear guidelines on how to move forward in social media and gain more visibility, thus leading to customers.

In the later chapters there is an introduction of Anneli Lariviere Photography, the state that is in now, following general guidelines on how to act based on findings from literatures and interviews. Anneli Lariviere Photography will get recommendations to contact clientele more effectively and take use of various recommended social media platforms.

The research question is: *How can small companies take advantage of social media in marketing?* The additional questions for supporting the key research question are: *How can social media optimization be used for businesses? What are the benefits of social media? What are the different types of social media?*

2 THEORY

2.1 Marketing

Kotler and Keller define marketing as "identifying and meeting human and social needs", meaning marketing is where needs and profitability meets (Kotler & Keller 2012, 5). Even though marketing can be defined in a very simple manner, the concept can change over the years. For example, the American Marketing Association has improved their perception. From 1985 to 2005 it was defined as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives". In 2013 they redefined it as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 7; American Marketing Association 2013.)

The new definition stresses the value of customers and product value. This means customer satisfaction comes from other places than high-quality products at a low price. It can be argued the former definition concentrates more on transactions, while the new definition accentuates durable relationships that are profitable for customers and the company. (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 8.) For consumers the new definition is a relief in a way; getting a sense the market has shifted from centering on the lowest possible price and not paying attention to quality. In the recent years there has been a feel of better product and customer value.

Now marketing is understood not only as selling a product, but also as satisfying the needs of customers. Marketing is the process companies use to create value and build relationships with consumers to get value from them in return. It is about meeting the needs in a social aspect, but also in a more anthropological characteristic. Marketing is connected to a way of life, not only in the sense of utilization, but also on the wellbeing of a society in general. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 28; Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 8.) Even in daily life the changes of marketing are noticed. It is now possible to buy electronics from South Korea and clothes from Denmark. This meets the needs of buyers on a whole new level, reaching from one part of the world to another.

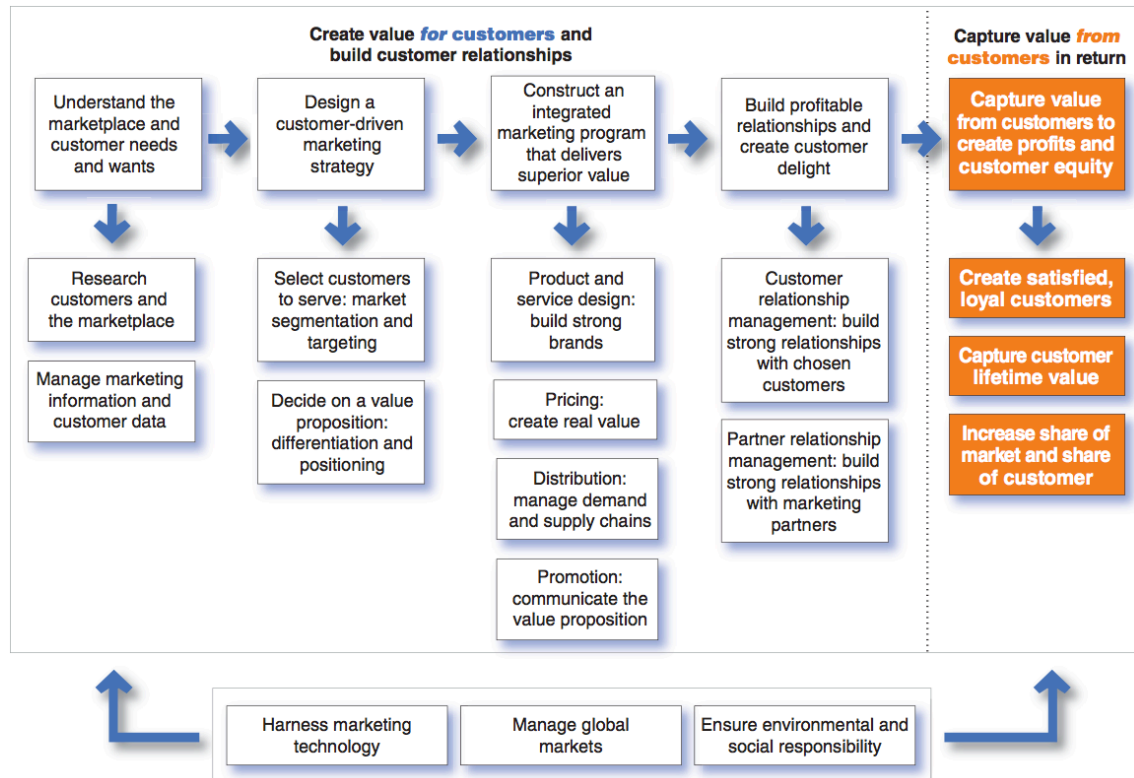


FIGURE 1. Marketing process defined (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 50).

Figure 1 defines marketing as a process. When creating value for customers, marketers take the value from customers in return. The first boxes force companies to understand the marketplace in general and through that what customers really want. Afterwards they can start planning a marketing strategy and program. This helps build relationships with customers and satisfy their needs. All of the previous steps create value for customers, but the last step is critical. It explains to capture value from customers, thus equalizing in profit and equity. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 28.) In a simpler form the marketing process can be explained as understanding the target market and with that information can a marketing strategy be made.

2.1.1 Marketing mix

Marketer Edmund Jerome McCarthy developed the marketing mix in the 1960's as a business tool used in marketing. It is a set of marketing instruments used by the company to implement a marketing strategy. The tools are set into four groups, named the four

P's of marketing: product, price, place and promotion. In order to deliver value, the company must have a product, which satisfies the needs of the market. The price of the product is then defined next, but also how the product will be targeted to consumers (place). The last step is to state how the company will be able to make themselves heard and persuades customers to purchase this product from many others (promotion). All of these stages need to be blended into a complete marketing program, with a purpose to deliver value to customers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 34.)

It has been argued that the marketing mix and its tool of four P's need to be updated to the standards of the 21st century. Instead of product, place, promotion and price, the four P's can now be seen as people, processes, programs and performance. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 25.) Even though a large part of marketing theories and strategies have been defined in the 20th century, it is always a worthy idea to take a step back and re-evaluate. Nowadays the modernized four P's serve marketers as well as consumers in an improved way.

TABLE 1. Marketing mix then and now (Kotler & Keller 2012).

Four P's	Modern Four P's
Product	People
Place	Processes
Promotion	Programs
Price	Performance

People can be seen as the internal part of what is inside the company. Employees are an important factor of a successful marketing and it also reflects on viewing consumers as people for a better understanding in buying behavior. Process is the development behind marketing management and having the right procedures for a beneficial long-term relationship with customers. Programs are the marketing activities inside a company, having the main goal of accomplishing marketing targets for it. Lastly, performance can be defined capturing the variety of probable outcomes measuring consequences financially and beyond. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 25-26.)

2.1.2 SWOT Analysis

SWOT is a commonly used analysis to define the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. They are to be analyzed in the viewpoint of market needs, but also competition. It is helpful when determining what aspects a company is succeeding in and where it might need developments on. It is simple to execute and provides information on what direction they should venture next.

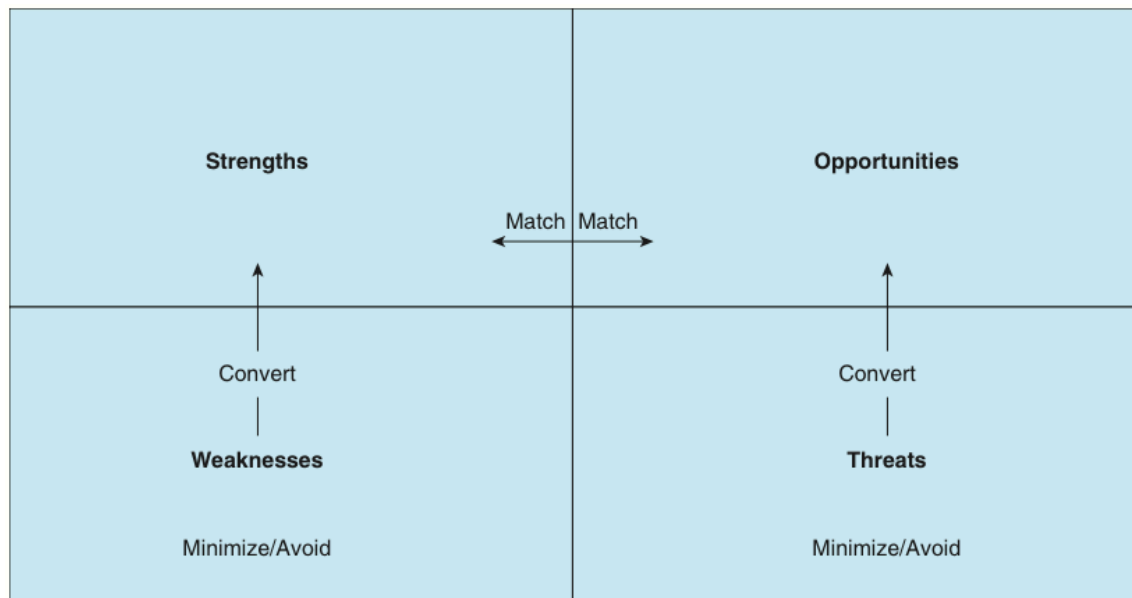


FIGURE 2. The SWOT matrix (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 132).

Usually, a company uses a SWOT matrix, as shown in figure 2 (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 132). This helps underline the most important issues and possibilities in a simple, but effective way. The analysis may be changed during time as the company develops, but the basic outline should stay the same. The analysis can also be applied to projects if needed.

The explanation of the matrix is straightforward. Strengths are aspects in a company that give it advantage over other companies in the same field. Weaknesses are the opposite, concentrating on disadvantages. Opportunities are prospects that can have a positive effect in the performance of a business. Threats on the other hand are factors that can cause difficulty for the company and should be avoided. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 78.)

The SWOT analysis is a simple, yet productive part of any marketing plan, and it helps to evaluate the big picture of a company. It does not require training or technical skills, only an understanding on how the company operates and what kind of competitors it has. It is inexpensive to create, and can easily improve the strategic planning of the company. It is a way of examining the external (opportunities and threats) and internal (strengths and weaknesses) marketing environment. (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 120-122; Kotler & Keller 2012, 48.)

2.1.3 Marketing strategy

A marketing strategy is the blueprint for reaching company goals. It defines the ways on how to reach wanted objectives and in what sort of means. It requires careful planning and time to take into effect all possible scenarios and notions. (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 17.)

For effective marketing strategies to take place, it is crucial to define the target market and how to serve them with the best possible way. The market is divided into customer segments and then choosing the right segments it will start marketing to. In marketing it is not important to choose as many customer segments as possible, but to serve customers well. A company has to select only a few customers that it can serve in a precise demeanor and gain profitability. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 30-31.) For example, H&M has targeted young adults, while on the other hand Stockmann has taken a reach for the older individuals. A company must realize it is impossible to serve every type of customer, making it wise to choose a few targets and invest in them.

A critical decision a company must make is how to differentiate and position itself from the marketplace. By promising to satisfy customer needs, it is defining its value proposition. By doing different value propositions, it helps brands differentiate themselves from another and help the customer answer the question of why they should buy this certain companies products and not their competitors'. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 31.) For example, Jaybirds BlueBuds X headphones are "The perfection of wireless sound" (Jaybird 2015). They differentiate themselves from other headphone-brands, stating of having flawless sound compared to other similar products.

2.1.4 Marketing plan and customer relationships

After strategizing the types of customers to serve and how to differentiate from competitors, companies need to create a marketing program to deliver the intended values to target customers. The marketing plan takes the marketing strategy by using the marketing mix tools and puts it in to action to build customer relationships. Blending each marketing mix tool together results in a joined marketing program with communication and delivery intended to value chosen customers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 34.)

A marketing plan is planned in advance, ensuring to have relevant and up-to-date information. Depending on the size of the company and what products they produce, marketing plans can vary in content. Ferrell and Hartline (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 41-46) have simplified a general outline of a typical marketing plan:

1. Executive summary. A synopsis of the overall idea of the marketing plan and strategies intended to be used. It should also provide information on the time frame of the strategy, thus giving an understanding of the extensiveness of the plan.
2. Situation analysis. A summary of the information obtained from three environments: the internal environment, the customer environment and the company's external environment. This covers all the issues with human resources, capacity of equipment, as well as summarizing the company's marketing objectives and performance. On the other hand, the analysis should also have an examination of the target market, but also information on competitors.
3. SWOT analysis. An analysis on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the company. Similar to situation analysis, the SWOT analysis gives information on satisfying needs of the target market.
4. Marketing goals and objectives. These are official statements of the anticipated and probable results developing from the marketing plan. Goals are broad and simple statements, while objectives concentrate more on specifics.
5. Marketing strategy. A framework on how the company will achieve wanted marketing objectives. This includes selecting and analyzing the target markets, but also creating an appropriate marketing program to gain an advantage compared to other similar products.

6. Marketing implementation. An explanation on how the marketing plan will be executed on a concrete level. This execution finds solutions on how and when marketing actions will be performed.
7. Evaluation and control. This section has all the details on how the marketing program will be evaluated, including information on performance assessments, if corrections are need to be made and how the performance has been performed compared to what has been planned.

The marketing plan implementation can be revised based on the company needs. The contents are usually similar in every marketing plan, even though they may be named differently. (Ferrell & Hartline 2011, 41-46.)

By understanding customer needs, designing a marketing strategy and constructing a marketing plan, the company can now focus on building profitable customer relationships. Managing customer relationships means building and maintaining them with customer value and satisfaction. It is not only acquiring new customers, but also maintaining current ones. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 34.)

Customer-perceived value is the customer's estimation of the difference between the benefits and costs of a marketing offer qualified to opposing offers. It is a personal value, meaning some consumers perceive value as low prices while others distinguish it as getting more for paying more. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 35.) For some, a standard 300€ laptop is good enough for writing and surfing the Internet. Other customers need more and might want to have a 1000€ laptop for gaming and editing photos. The key is to find the customers who value a gaming laptop and market to the right target group.

Customer satisfaction on the other hand is the expectations of a product's performance. It is simply making the connection of having a successful product performance and having satisfied customers. The higher the satisfaction, the higher the loyalty a customer has to a certain company. This in return results in achieving better customer performance. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014, 35.) For example, Amazon has a respectable customer satisfaction. They answer rapidly to any questions or concerns a buyer may have and always ask if there is anything else they can do to help. This keeps customers going back again, because of excellent customer service.

2.2 Social media described

Social media refers to two parts. *Social* signifying the need to be in contact with other people, and *media* indicating the technology used to make social connections with others. People have a need to be around one another and feel like they belong in a group, sharing thoughts and ideas. We are social to begin with, so by sharing what we are doing is only in our nature. (Safko 2010, 4; Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen & Heinonen 2008, 13.)

With social media, communication is made easier either directly or with media objects, such as photos or videos. Communities and networks are an important part of it, because without them content could not be shared. (Safko 2010, 4; Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen & Heinonen 2008, 13.) Now solely writing-based social media sites are being pushed back, and platforms that support visuals are taking a rise. People are paying more attention to graphics when dealing with people, but also with companies. Even basic corporate blogs invest in high quality photos right from the beginning.

Social media can also be defined based on three key elements: content, communities and Web 2.0, as seen in figure 3. Users create content wanting to publish it on the web: photos, pictures, videos, and links. Now the content is broader and sharing information made easier. Communicating on the users whereabouts, setting up play-lists for different applications, and making blog posts on the go is now simplified. There are numerous ways sharing information is made possible. (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen & Heinonen 2008, 13.)

Tim O'Reilly popularized the term "Web 2.0" in 2004 when describing a new phase of web development. He wanted to emphasize the movement from static web pages into dynamic ones. Dynamic web pages serve the user with much more than a blank page and no interaction, it serves as the gateway to sharing content. Without this technology, content sharing would not be possible. (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen & Heinonen 2008, 13.)

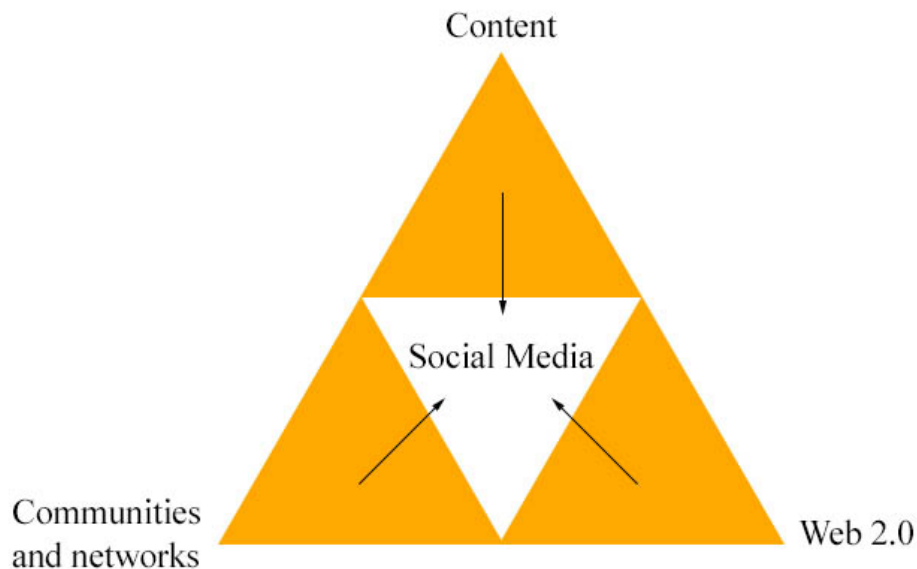


FIGURE 3. The social media triangle (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen & Heinonen 2008, 14).

Social media is how people can use technology resourcefully to connect with others. It is a new set of tools, a new way for businesses to connect with customers more efficiently. Social media is the Web 2.0 for newspapers, radios and television. It is the same mean of marketing and communicating, but more effective. (Safko 2010, 4-5.)

2.2.1 Effectiveness of social media

Traditional marketing has been efficient because of the lack of other ways of marketing. Unlike before, social media marketing lets businesses into a two-way communication opportunity with clients. With social media a typical business lets the consumer in with more trust. Customers now get information about a product from people they appreciate. They can read trusted reviews form other, real customers. They can share experiences about the company truthfully. This means companies do not longer control their corporate messages, but the power lies in the customers and their experiences. (Safko 2010, 5.) There are numerous review-sites on the web, and it has become more of a standard to read evaluations. For example, going out to dinner to a new restaurant now starts with reading analyses on the web from previous customers. The more positive feedback, the more likely the customer will end up dining there.

Social media marketing is similar to entering a conversation in the beginning, then listening and lastly participating. It is a more natural and comfortable way to sell products, build relationships with customers, therefore turning into positive brand imaging and word of mouth. Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels have calculated word of mouth recommendations having a strong impact on new customer acquisition, compared to other means of marketing. (Safko 2010, 6; Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels 2009.) Even in the daily life the most trusting reviews come from friends and family. It is more likely to visit a place if a friend has personally recommended it.

Social media is a platform for online conversations to take place, giving access to many customers at once, unlike the traditional ways of communication. Social media can be viewed in two different ways. It can be used for brand awareness and networking in the personal, but also corporate segment. (Coles 2014, 4.) Figure 4 shows how effective digital advertising actually is compared to other means of marketing. The chart can also be viewed in a time-aspect. Digital advertising is becoming more popular, while on the contrary radio marketing is not used as much because of the simple fact that people do not listen to radio as often as before.

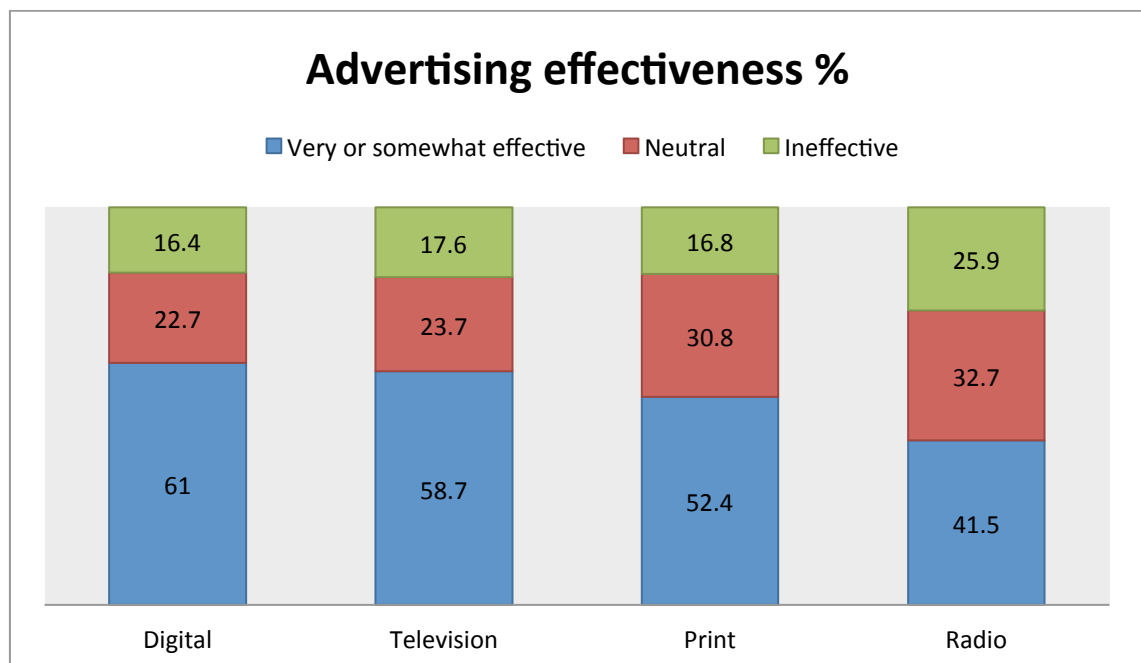


FIGURE 4. Social media effectiveness compared to other means of marketing (Nanji 2013).

2.2.2 Benefits of social media

Companies enter the world of social media to strengthen their brand image for customers. They become more appealing to consumers, but also to current and future employees. Social media can consequently benefit in building the company a better reputation amongst people. It helps strengthen the brand name in the minds of consumers. (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour 2011, 7.) When applying for a job, it is now a standard for the potential employee to check the future employers website. This is an easy way to find information about company history, but also how they act in social media. If the company has a strong client base, for example on Facebook, the more likely they are to have a positive image in the minds of future personnel.

Companies profit in social media especially when searching for help in communication. It is excellent for corresponding between current and potential customers, receiving feedback from products and giving customers service faster. Communication on brand value and brand attributes to potential customers is furthermore simplified. (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour 2011, 7-8.) For example, If P&C Insurance Company answers to their customers via Facebook within the same day, during business hours. If a customer needs more assistance, the company asks for the customers phone number and calls them, thus serving clients made easier and faster.

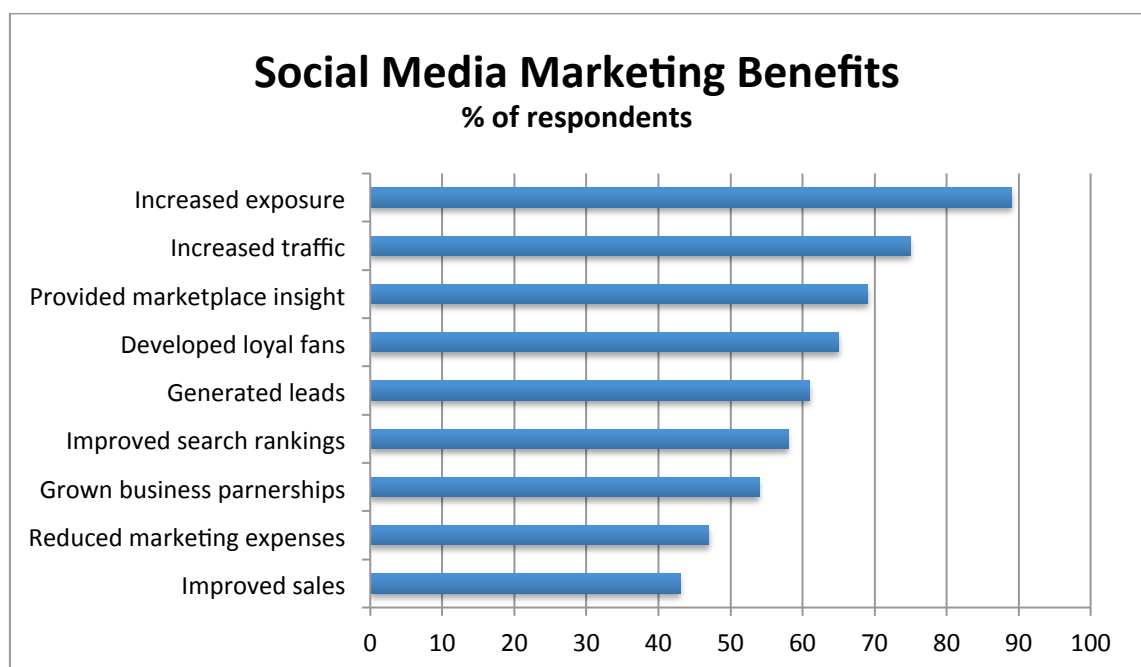


FIGURE 5. Benefits of social media marketing (Stelzner 2013).

Additional benefits of social media include having a wide audience, the fact that it is significantly low-priced compared to other marketing strategies, and engaging with customers is easier. More advantages can be found in figure 5. If a company prefers using more traditional methods of communication, it should be kept in mind that social media can be used alongside with them. The key factor is real-time feedback from customers. (Coles 2014, 5.)

As stated earlier, the biggest benefit of social media is the vast amount of audience in a companies target market. The most popular use of social media is the attempt to get more visitors to a website. The more clicks to a site, the more prospects and leads to potential customers. On the other hand, gaining lots of visitors does not always promise customers, since only 2-4% of them will actually end up using the services provided or buying the products in question, as stated in figure 6. (Zimmerman & Ng 2013, 42.)

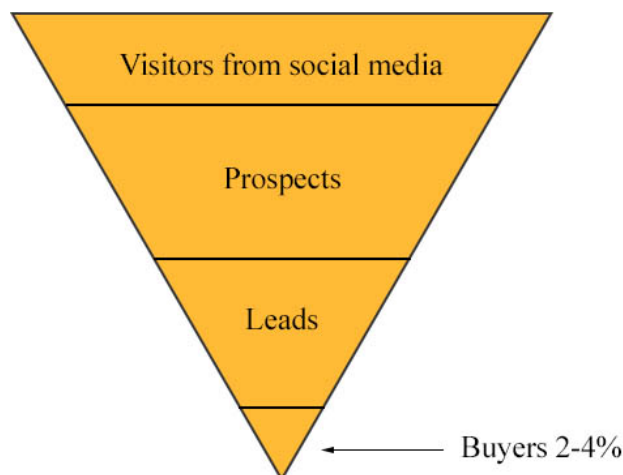


FIGURE 6. Visitors from social media vs. desired results (Zimmerman & Ng 2013).

Word of mouth is the most relied upon factor when considering buying products because people trust recommendations from friends and family more than commercials, as seen in figure 7. It is also the most effective form of marketing, as 92% find it the trust worthiest of all advertising. The only complication is it takes time for the news of a new and worthy product to spread. Social media is taking word of mouth to the next level. When combined with the traditional marketing mix, the probable reach to people is enormous and word of new products can spread at swift rates. (Bennett, 2012; Trusov,

Bucklin & Pauwels 2009.) Today blogs have an upper hand when it comes to setting trends or distributing news about quality products. For example, a popular beauty blog stated a certain eye shadow palette to be the best there is. It quickly sold out in various different online stores and became the most wanted makeup kit from the years 2011-2014. This goes to show the power of the consumer, but also the power of the modern day word of mouth.

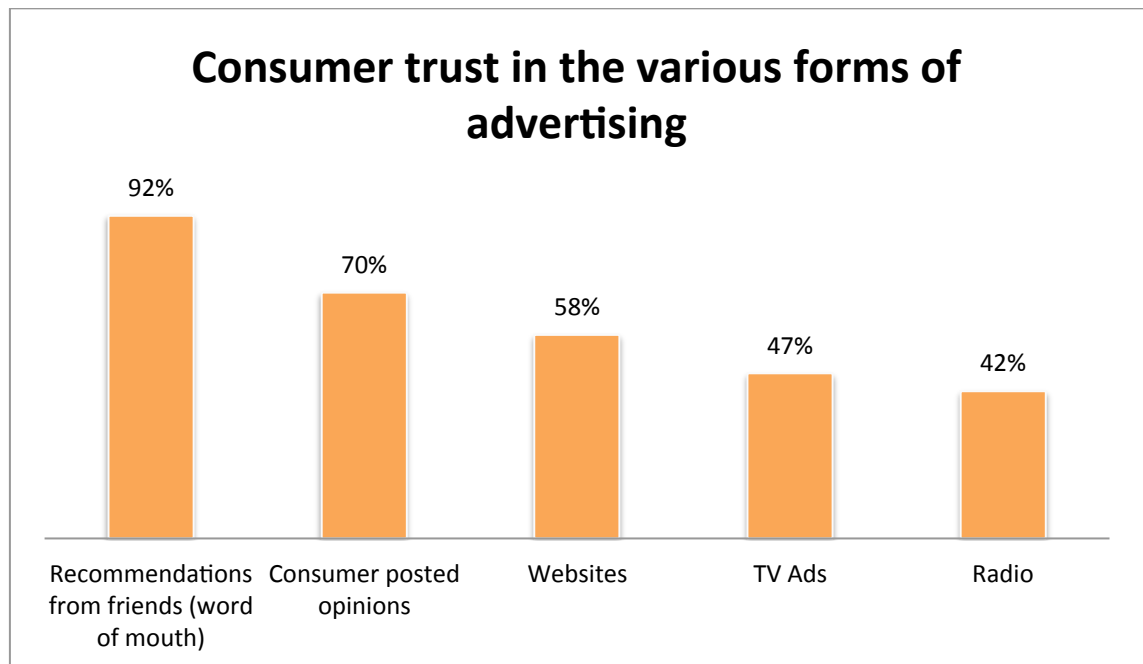


FIGURE 7. The percentage of what consumers trust in advertising (Bennett 2012).

2.2.3 Risks of social media

As in all marketing, social media also has risks that users need to be aware of. Social media has millions of users (depending on the platform), so it is getting more and more difficult to gain the amount of visibility to get noticed. The biggest obstacle for new companies going in to social media is the need to invest a relatively large amount of time to see results. Employers must review and respond to comments quickly, but also remember to deliver new material frequently. Now it is not enough to set up a social media profile, it needs serious commitment and long-time planning, not to mention quality of content. (Zimmerman & Ng 2013, 47.)

Undoubtedly, another risk is the rapid change of social media trends and being aware of shifting social media sites' terms of use. It is important to stay on top of new social media sets and to know when a platform has reached its peak and is downgrading. The conditions and terms are prone to change often, and it is imperative to stay on top of the knowledge. For example, in 2012 it was still prohibited to use the Facebook's Like-button as a voting mechanism for a promotion. As of August 2013, the terms have since changed. (Herrington 2013; Facebook 2013.)

Of course other risks involve not actually knowing how to use social media platforms, not everything needs to be Facebooked, Tweeted or Youtubed. This can be seen as a lack of having a clear social marketing plan, but also not knowing how to execute it. Competitors are often aware of other similar companies social media statuses, thus making the risk of exposing valuable insight into their strategies and activities high. (Marsh, 2014.)

It is also important to have a sense of timing and humor, as picture 1 shows. A cooking site Epicurious decided to tweet about the Boston Marathon bombing, but also wanted to promote their own recipes (Feloni 2013). Needless to say, it was bad timing and not a thoroughly thought out post. It is imperative to make it a priority to be aware of trending, but also tragic events before posting. Otherwise the consequences can impact the business in a crucial manner.



Picture 1. Epicurious tweeting of Boston Marathon bombing (Feloni 2013).

2.2.4 Traditional media marketing vs. social media marketing

Newsletters, websites, articles, surveys, TV and radio events and telephone calls are now being all replaced by social media. Most of the more traditional ways of marketing

are costly and not easily executed. A major part of companies (especially startups) simply cannot afford TV and radio advertising, and today it is not even remarkably cost-effective. (Coles 2014, 3.)

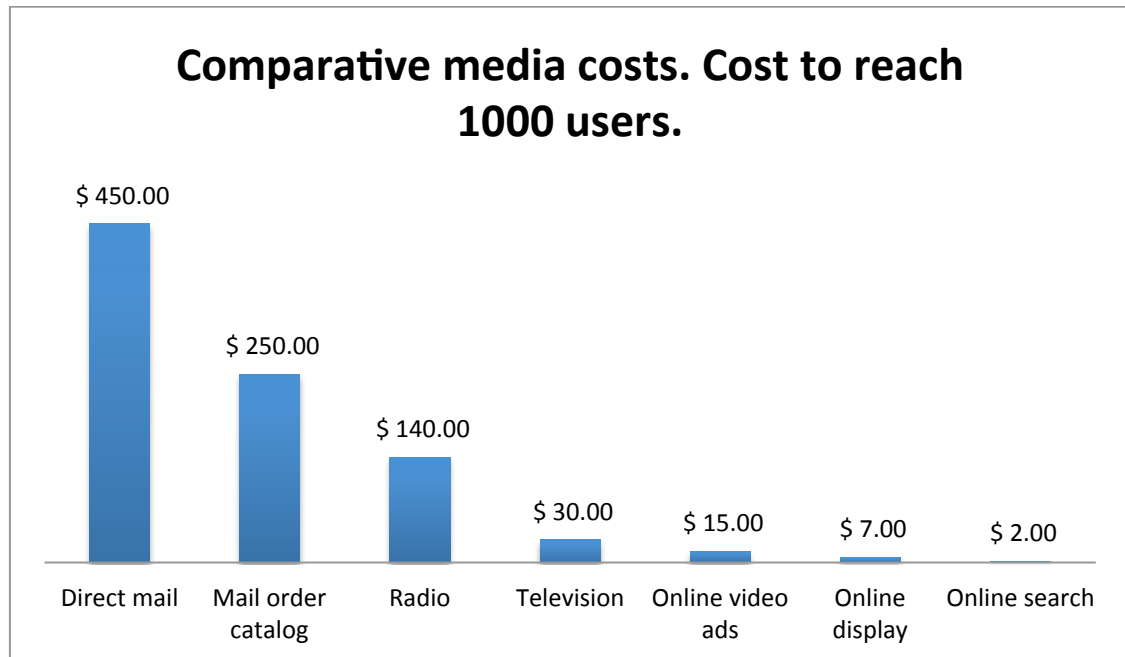


FIGURE 8. Cost of traditional media marketing contrasting social media marketing (Fou, 2013).

At the moment, the only cost social media has compared to traditional media, is the users own time and the amount wanting to put into it. As stated earlier, to succeed in social media marketing means having a dedicated social media employee group ready to invest their time into customer comments and engagements. (Coles 2014, 4.)

New media offers alternative ways to stay in touch with potential and new customers. Instead of writing newsletters, customers can be informed of new happenings on LinkedIn. LinkedIn ought also be used for business-to-business networking, as well as building a connection base for a business. Small updates can be put on Twitter and a website is now being replaced by a Facebook page. Facebook is also great for fast-answering customers and engaging with them, but also for increasing brand exposure. YouTube now substitutes TV and radio with recorded seminars and viral demonstration of products. (Coles 2014, 4.)

When discussing the differences between social media and traditional media, incorporation is essential to remember. Even though they might be thought of as different arenas, customers feel marketing has the same agenda: corporate image. For example, in 2006 a video went viral where two performers dropped Mentos-mints into a 2-litre bottle of Coca-Cola. The video became a major hit on YouTube and Coca-Cola saw this as an advantage. They started showing the video on television and distributed it digitally in every country. The campaign itself was very low-cost, but sales on Coca-Cola were improving enormously. (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010, 65.)

Social media marketing is inexpensive, reaches a larger audience, can interact with customers, and has measurable results unlike in traditional media. Social media marketing is also a two-way street; meaning customers can be engaged and interacted with, but they can also do the same. When a customer leaves a comment or a question on a company's Facebook-page, it is important to be answered within 24-36 hours. Inactive pages are noticed quickly and are disproved of, as figure 9 states. (Bennett, 2012.)

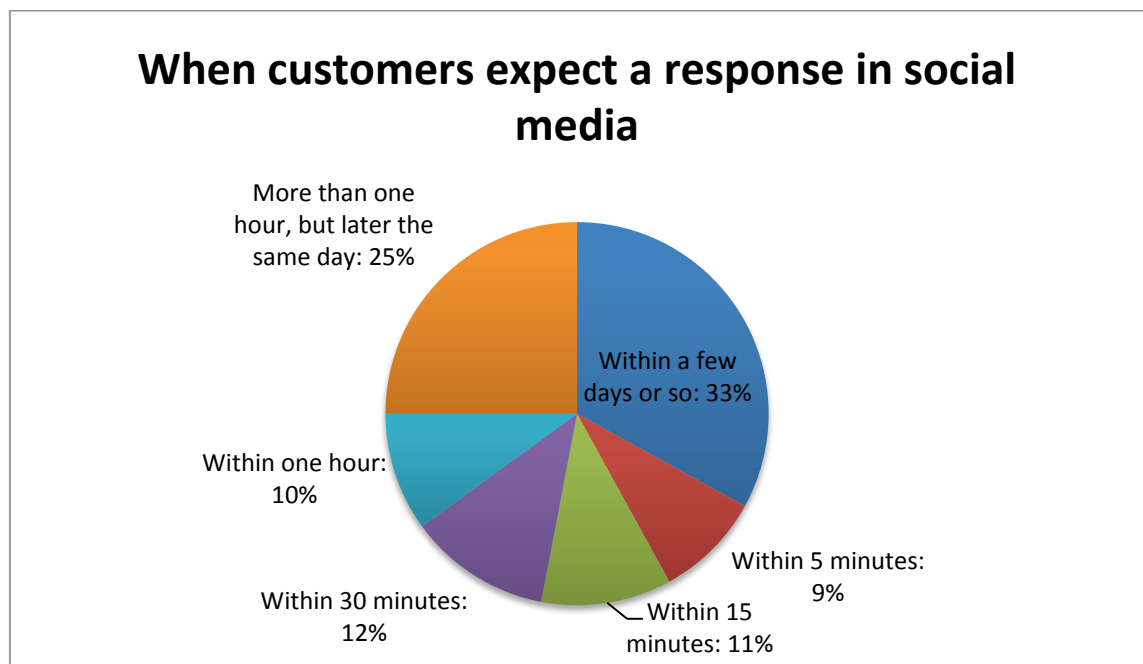


FIGURE 9. How fast customers expect a response from companies in social media (Baer 2012).

While social media marketing is praised upon, it can also be time consuming and the impact can spread quickly. Traditional campaigns on the other hand produce short-term

results, but they also have a higher amount of concreteness and the results are more permanent. Traditional marketing has been an essential part of the marketing mix from the beginning of advertising. Businesses and organizations have found it to be an appreciated tool and fairly trusted upon consumers. Now consumers are looking to get information about a product they are interested in in a fast and easy way. At the same time businesses want to measure the effectiveness of their marketing strategies and how they are being used. (Bennett, 2012.)

Social media marketing is a solution to a well-known problem. Customers can learn about a product or service fast and businesses get important data on who is viewing their content. They also get real-time information about their products or services for a moderate investment. (Bennett, 2012.)

2.3 Different platforms of social media

There are numerous choices of social media sites, but by far the most popular ones are Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube. Other relevant sites are Google+, Instagram and Vine. Additional online channels for marketing are different blogs and podcasts. (Coles 2014, 5.)

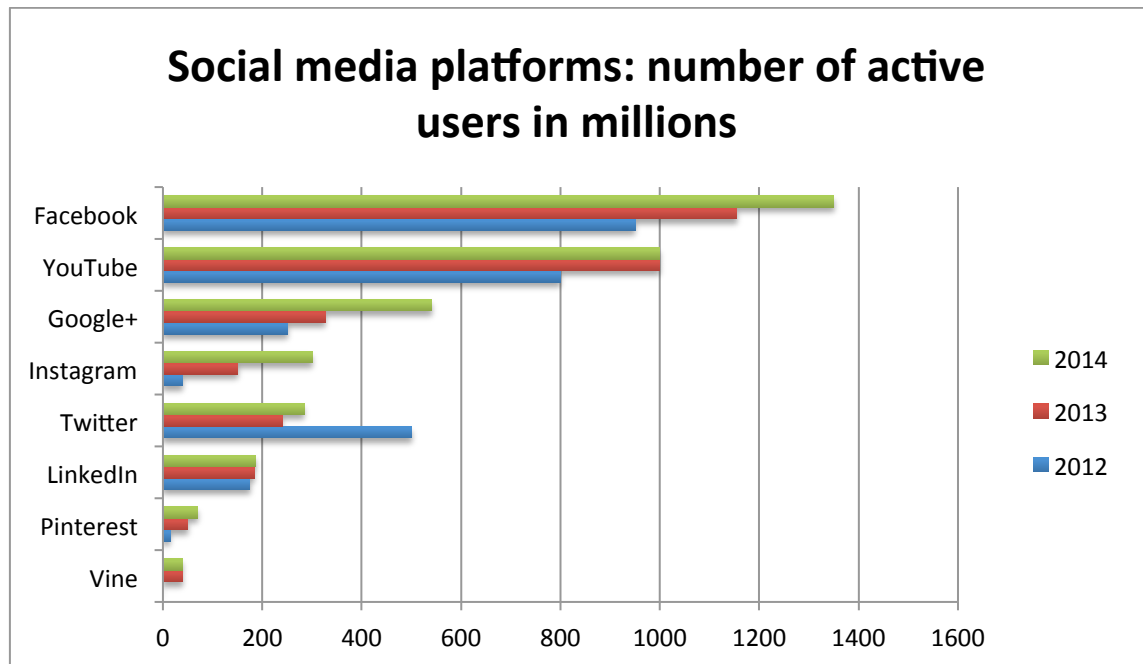


FIGURE 10. Different social media platforms ranked by the amount of active users in millions. The users are also compared by the years 2012-2014. (Kissmetrics 2012; Bishop 2012; Digital Strategy Consulting 2013; Allton 2014.)

2.3.1 Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg, Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes, having a mission to give people the means to share and connect easily, founded Facebook in 2004 and it is now the most popular social media platform on the Internet. Facebook is used to stay connected with family and friends, to discover news in the world and to share things that matter. Facebook has over one billion users worldwide, 50% of them use it actively every day. Facebook is a podium for connecting with friends, family, coworkers, and acquaintances in different kinds of groups. It is probably best known for its communication tools via various social networks. (Facebook 2014; Coles 2014, 29; Safko 2010, 450.)

For companies it is easy to set up a business page and get real-time interaction from customers. Free of charge, it is possible to receive real-time feedback and engage with possible clients. Facebook business pages are easily spotted by Google and can be used as a small businesses first website. (Coles 2014, 30.)

Businesses can also use Facebook for networking, communication inside the company, planning and tracking events, but also promoting products and services to possible consumers (Safko 2010, 451). Now it feels as if businesses want to get away from the Facebook-scene and move on towards having their own webpages with quality content. Facebook can be an easy stepping-stone for businesses that do not yet have the capital or skill to make own webpages, but after a few months it is suitable to start using other means of communication as well.

Table 2 shows the growth of Facebook in 2013 to 2014. Notably the dominating age group is 18-29 year olds, but 30-49 year olds have had a decrease. Also there has been a huge increase in 65+ year olds using Facebook between the years of 2013 and 2014. This growth can be due to the ease of using this specific platform, but also other reasons such as reconnecting with relatives and bridging the generation gap.

TABLE 2. Among online adults, the percentage who use Facebook (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhard & Madden 2015).

	2013	2014
Men	66%	66%
Women	76%	77%
Age 18-29	84%	87%
Age 30-49	79%	73%
Age 50-64	60%	63%
Age 65+	45%	56%

2.3.2 Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read 140-character messages called “tweets”. It is a form of micro blogging, since it only has a limited amount of characters to write an opinion. It can be a powerful tool for networking, researching, publishing and listening. Many businesses use it as a sort of “icebreaker” for networking and starting conversation. There are about one billion registered users and was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass. (Coles 2014, 81.)

Businesses can use this platform to share information about their products and services. Especially when about unwanted press or hot topics that need to be addressed quickly, Twitter is a very common tool to use. It has become well used by all sorts of people and businesses because the short messages can be understood quickly. With Twitter, users read the messages, comprehend them and move on. (Coles 2014, 82; Safko 2010, 12.)

Table 3 shows there have been an increasing number of Twitter users; especially men have joined Twitter more often than women. Table 2 stated 30-49 year olds of leaving Facebook, while on the other hand Twitter has gained a significant number of new users in the same age group. It can be speculated that in the future years Facebook will have a decrease of users and other social media platforms will increase theirs.

TABLE 3. Among online adults, the percentage who use Twitter (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhard & Madden 2015).

	2013	2014
Men	17%	24%
Women	18%	21%
Age 18-29	31%	37%
Age 30-49	19%	25%
Age 50-64	9%	12%
Age 65+	5%	10%

2.3.3 YouTube

YouTube was founded in 2006 by Steven Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim, allowing billions of people discover, watch and share videos. It is a forum that allows people to connect, inform and inspire others all around the world. It also is a distribution platform for large- and small-scaled advertisers. (YouTube, 2014.)

YouTube is the #1 website to go to when video marketing a product or a service. It is a popular and easy way to explain something for millions of users. YouTube can be thought of as a resource channel to find answers to questions and how to do something but it can also be an entertainment center. (Coles 2014, 127.)

In YouTube, businesses have the chance to make a video, get exposure and have millions of views worldwide. The price of a good video is the fact that it needs to be tastefully made, but also captivating. It needs to have emotion and actually touch the viewer whether it is with laughter, sadness, love or some other feeling. YouTube has become more popular over the years because videos have a direct effect on the human experience. The more senses involved in receiving information, the more engaging the process of watching becomes. Creating videos are all about educating and communicating with the network and customers. (Coles 2014, 128; Safko 2010, 227.)

2.3.4 LinkedIn

Reid Hoffman founded LinkedIn in 2002 and officially launched it in 2003. LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with 300 million members in over 200 countries. LinkedIn helps connections with professionals around the world, but also receiving updates on jobs, news, people and insights, which is helpful professionally. (LinkedIn, 2014.)

Networking and connecting with professionals is the main function of LinkedIn. Connecting with other similar people can help build the relationship base of a business, and have the potential to grow it. Connection lists become more valuable because of the connections of connections and their connections. LinkedIn members find jobs and business opportunities, but also get recommendations from their associates. Employers can list job opportunities and search for possible job applicants. It is vital to have a professional appearance on LinkedIn, since it is the first place professionals seek out for information about others. (Coles 2014, 54; Safko 2010, 33-34.)

LinkedIn has had an increased amount of subscribed users, as table 4 shows. Most of the users are aged between 30-49 year olds, but there has been a huge leap in 50-64 year old users from 24% to 30%. LinkedIn has a reputation for being used by professionals, and that can explain the increasing amount of working people in this specific platform.

TABLE 4. Among online adults, the percentage who use LinkedIn (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhard & Madden 2015).

	2013	2014
Men	24%	28%
Women	19%	27%
Age 18-29	15%	23%
Age 30-49	27%	31%
Age 50-64	24%	30%
Age 65+	13%	21%

2.3.5 Instagram

Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger founded Instagram in 2010 and is an online photo- and video-sharing service. Facebook bought it in 2012 and it has over 150 million monthly active users. It is an image-sharing tool and is great for sharing pictures on various other social media sites. (Coles 2014, 163.)

Images on Instagram can be shared on both Facebook and Twitter. It is possible for people to comment on pictures and it is advised for a company to add a link to their website in the description information. Instagram is a great marketing channel for any business and it makes marketing escapades easier. For example, customers can post pictures of themselves wearing a particular brand's clothes and hashtagging the company in question. (Coles 2014, 168.)

Table 5 shows there has not been a decrease in any age groups of Instagram, on the contrary. The dominant users are within the age of 18-29, which makes it an appealing platform for lots of clothing, entertainment and media brands concentrated on this specific age group.

TABLE 5. Among online adults, the percentage who use Instagram (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhard & Madden 2015).

	2013	2014
Men	15%	22%
Women	20%	29%

Age 18-29	37%	53%
Age 30-49	18%	25%
Age 50-64	6%	11%
Age 65+	1%	6%

2.3.6 Vine

Vine is a six-second long video sharing service with a continuous loop. It was founded in 2012 by Don Hofmann, Rus Yusupov and Colin Kroll, but bought by Twitter just before the official launch in the same year. It has the same similarities as Instagram, but only for videos. It has over 40 million users and it's basically run through the users smartphone. (Kafka & Isaac 2012; Coles 2014, 163.)

Vine works best with business-to-consumer rather than business-to-business because of its playfulness and laid-back but also youthful atmosphere. As an example, Vine can be used by a start-up café by posting short videos of coffee art, customers having fun, creating the perfect latte, milk moustaches, and the like. In comparison to Instagram, the chances are limitless, as a video can portray more than a simple image. (Coles 2014, 165-167.)

2.3.7 Pinterest

Ben Silbermann, Paul Sciarra and Evan Sharp founded Pinterest in 2010. Pinterest is a platform where users can discover ideas for their projects and interests having about 50 million users, a majority of them female, as shown in table 6. It can be compared to as online scrapbooking with a twist. (Pinterest 2014; Coles 2014, 155.)

Pinterest has become a phenomenon through the beauty of digital collections. The idea is sharing beautiful and captivating images for others to admire. Users frequently go to Pinterest for inspiration on photography, wedding ideas, recipes, whatever imaginable. Businesses can use this to become a curator of a product, driving traffic back to their

main website, finding like-minded people with similar content and developing their own online profile within their professional field on Pinterest. (Coles 2014, 156.)

TABLE 6. Among online adults, the percentage who use Pinterest (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhard & Madden 2015).

	2013	2014
Men	8%	13%
Women	33%	42%
Age 18-29	27%	34%
Age 30-49	24%	28%
Age 50-64	14%	27%
Age 65+	9%	17%

2.3.8 Google+

Google+ was launched in 2011 and has millions of users, although most of them non-active. Google+ stands somewhere between Facebook and LinkedIn, though it has not quite yet established its own place in the social networking world. (Coles 2014, 145.) It is a part of the Google enterprise, which fully owns and operates it.

Google+ offers its users some definite advantages compared to other social media sites. Search engine optimization is the most crucial one. Since Google+ and YouTube are owned by Google, it favors its own content from its own members over and above another platform or website. Having a business on Google+ can be rewarding when talking about search results and an account can definitely favor the outcomes. (Coles 2014, 146.)

Google+ has also several other benefits to its point. Google+ Hangout, a live video chat similar to Skype, and the ability to send emails to another Google+ user without actually knowing their email address. There is also a possibility for Google+ users to put their friends into “circles”, comparable to Facebook. Otherwise the functions are the same as every other social media site: content posting and sharing, commenting, sending messages, creating events, adding videos and photos, using hashtags and many more. (Coles 2014, 146-147.)

2.3.9 Blogs and podcasts

A blog is a simple web site updated by a person who is specified in a particular subject and posts about topics related to that theme. A blog can have posts about opinions, thoughts on latest revelations, pictures of daily outfits, videos and more. Blogs can be characterized into two different types: either posting about news on a specific subject or having a personal journal. One of the most important factors on having a blog is the interaction within the comment-section. Blogging allows expressing ideas and opinions, and at the same time it is possible to have real conversations with like-minded readers. (Safko 2010, 145.)

Businesses can use blogs for internal communication to employees, but also they can be designed so that consumers can read them (Safko 2010, 145). Companies are now struggling with the fact of creating quality content. There is a huge impact on what companies write on their corporate blogs: it needs to be informative but captivating, and at the same time needs to make the reader come back for more. There are numerous amounts of possibilities on how to take advantage of a company blog; the key is to find the right tone.

Podcasts are audio files and, like blogs, they can cover anything from historical events to just a talk show. Podcasts first appeared in 2004, but have now have reappeared in 2014 as a marketing tool for businesses. They allow professionals to state their own opinions in simple audio format, which also makes it easy to produce. Marketing and business insights for young entrepreneurs are the most popular categories for podcasts. (Newlands 2014.)

2.4 Social Media Optimization

Social media optimizations (SMO) goal is to generate traffic and awareness for a website. In a common sense, SMO is optimizing a website and its contents so that it can be easily shared and accessed through various social media and networking sites. It is used to increase the awareness of a product, brand or event to the general public through the

use of diverse social media outlets and communities. (Rayson 2013; Berg 2013.) Search engine optimization (SEO) on the other hand, is a way to improve and endorse a website to increase the amount of visitors it has in a different sense. SEO is concentrated more on the technical aspect of gaining visitors, emphasizing on how to optimize it for search engines. (Fishkin 2012.)

TABLE 7. The differences between social media optimization and search engine optimization defined (Buckner 2013).

Social Media Optimization (SMO)	Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
Interlinking: potential audience has multiple touch points regardless of what social media platform they use.	Tagging: resourceful way to get found content.
Influencers: identify media influences that will spread content to other social media channels.	Keyword research: what the audience is searching for in content and updates.
Google trends: useful in finding relevant content, thus generating ideas for own social media page.	Optimization: optimizing all elements of social media channel thus ensuring better find ability and information on company profile.
Engagement: interact and engage with consumers	URLs: easy to find urls are key for customer findings.

Marketer Rohit Bhargava first introduced SMO in 2006 and presented it as a service option to increase marketing effectiveness within social media itself, creating the 5 rules of SMO. The rules have been rewritten into a more functional way and in an approach that it serves us better in 2014. The key factor is to have some guidelines for SMO, but keeping in mind that the general goal is optimization. (Berg 2013.)

SMO is becoming more important to search engines because they are applying the recommendations of social media users in their result pages. Users of Facebook, Twitter and Google+ are now getting more power for their shares. SMO is concentrated on content quality, rather than the structure of a website. The influence of the author and the

user experience of interacting with the content and the author help improve optimization implementation as search engines gradually look for social signals to aid the ranking of pages. (Rayson 2013.)

Webpages have had more traffic driven to them from social networks than Google. The fact on how interesting the content on a web page is and how easily it can be shared on a variety of networks are the two most important factors why social referral traffic is larger for a website than Google's. (Tobin 2010.) For example, figure 11 shows Comedy Central gains over 20% of its traffic from social networks, but only just a little over 15% from Google.

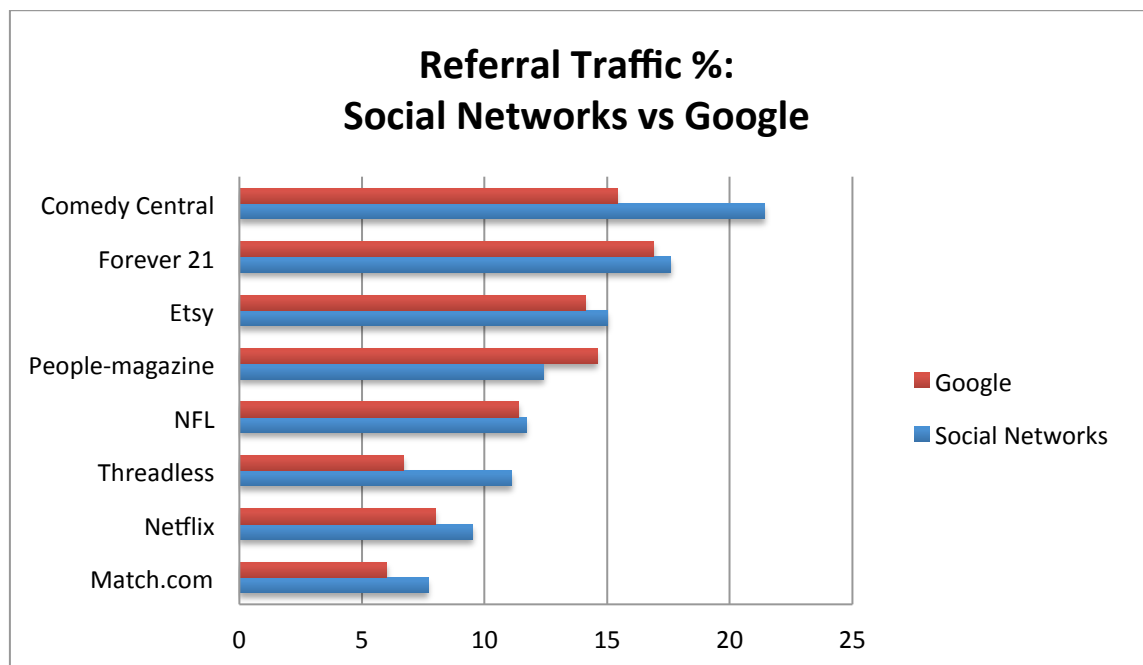


FIGURE 11. Traffic driven from social media versus Google (Tobin 2010).

2.4.1 The 5 rules of social media optimization

Marketer Rohit Bhargava initially wrote the original 5 rules of social media optimization in 2006 and they are as follows:

1. Increase linkability
2. Make tagging and bookmarking easy
3. Inbound links are to be rewarded

4. Help content travel
5. Encourage the mashup

Since then, they have been rewritten multiple times due to the changes happening in technology, social media and marketing in general. Marketers have gone out of their way to make their own set of rules, which social media experts would start to follow. (Bhargava, 2006.)

Some rules are not as relevant as before, so Bhargava changed them to apply for content marketing in the future:

1. Create shareable content
2. Make sharing easy
3. Reward engagement
4. Proactively share content
5. Encourage the mashup

In 2006 sharing was a relatively new word in the social media circles, and it was not used as much as today. The 5 new rules have been revised to satisfy social media marketers currently, having the focus on sharing quality content rather than gaining more visitors to websites. (Bhargava, 2010.)

Tagging and bookmarking were the hot topic of 2006, because there was no easier way to share content on the web. Now it is possible to embed videos, send tweets, create hashtags and much more. Once there is relevant content, sharing should be made easy for the sake of other users. Marketers struggle with engaging with their customers even though there is a range of definitions for it: comments, discussions, posting and sharing content. The key factor is to be consistent and relative. Posting only about topics that would interest consumers, but having other activities also. (Bhargava, 2010.)

Encouraging mashup means users take some piece of content, add their own input into it and sharing it in social media. This is the only rule that has stayed intact and has not changed much in the later years. (Bhargava, 2010.) An example of a good mashup in SMO can be taken from YouTube. If a user wanted to post a YouTube-video on a site, it

is made easy by a simple code, which is seen by default on any videos page. This allows users to embed videos to their sites seamlessly.

3 CASE: ANNELI LARIVIERE PHOTOGRAPHY

3.1 Research problem and focus of the study

The key research question in this thesis is: *How can small companies take advantage of social media in marketing?* The additional questions for supporting the key research question were: *How can social media optimization be used for businesses? What are the benefits of social media? What are the different types of social media?*

The study in this thesis focuses on social media and how it can be used as an advantage for companies. The thesis has been commissioned by a photography startup in Tampere, Anneli Lariviere Photography. The purpose is to give guidelines for a new business; how to get in to the social media world, get in contact with customers, post about relevant topics and what are the significant platforms for a photography company.

Interviews were conducted to get an idea of the situation of social media today, and to gain a perspective of social media in the viewpoint of a company.

3.2 Interviews

Interviews were lead as part of the research to gain insight inside companies and what is their vision of social media as marketing experts. It was important to receive an understanding on the perceptions of social media in marketing today.

Two of the interviews took place via email for the sake of ease and time, as one of the interviewees was currently in Espoo, Finland. One of the interviews was conducted at the advertising agency. The participants were chosen based on the size of the company and what position they had in the company. Because of the small sample of participants, it cannot be assumed that the answers represent the ideology of all marketing professionals.

Ainomaija Pippuri is the Head of External Communications at If P&C Insurance since 2010. Before working at If she worked for Adsek Oy as an Account Executive and be-

fore that as a communications consultant and journalist in various different companies. Annariina Tolvanen is a Social Media Manager at VLOCI since 2014. Expert #1 is a social media expert working in a medium-sized advertising agency. Two citations were translated from Finnish to English by the author, one interview was answered in English.

3.2.1 Interview results

The general perception seemed to be the meaning of social media is becoming increasingly important in the business life, as well as personal lives. It can in a personal aspect make the world smaller, connecting people from around the world and exploring places otherwise missed. Social media has become an established means of marketing, especially with the larger businesses as a communications and marketing channel for target markets. The outlets of social media are growing on a daily basis and the pace of development is constant. (Pippuri 2014; Tolvanen 2014; Expert #1 2015.)

Social media has by itself become a significant marketing channel in a short amount of time. There are new things to learn in social media as the channel menu is constantly evolving. In the marketing point of view, companies are now in a sense being forced to take social media into their marketing and communication planning. It is now seen as a vital tool for company interactions because they can reach their target market independently and in a different way. Social media is a relevant tool for marketing with interaction, but also in listening. Interaction with customers has now become a way of communication, with the chance of actually answering and replying to questions. (Pippuri 2014; Tolvanen 2014; Expert #1 2015.)

The benefits of social media are clear; it gives a chance for interaction and having an open dialogue with customers. Various social media channels allow companies to produce different content that genuinely interest customers, but it must be done in an accurate way. This means having a different plan for different social media platforms. Another benefit is the amount of people a company is able to reach. It is very cost effective, getting in touch with interested customers locally and worldwide. On the other hand, the conversations that take place in social media are very difficult to control. There is no way in telling how a customer will react, so it is important to be ready to

participate in critical discussions as well. Also there is little understanding on the technological aspect of social media marketing. Companies need to know about new applications, trends and tools. (Pippuri 2014; Tolvanen 2014; Expert #1 2015.)

When asked about the top 3 advices for businesses going into the social media market, the answers were quite different. Pippuri (2014) advised to think carefully about the main goals the business has in social media. What platforms are important and where are the potential customers active? It is also important to be active and listen to customers, but also participate in the discussions. The third advice was to ask for feedback from customers on the company's social media activities. Is there something to be done differently? What kind of content are customers interested in? How to differentiate from competitors? (Pippuri 2014.)

Tolvanen (2014) encouraged in building a proper story and thus engage people to follow along the way. She also advised to focus on quality, not quantity when it comes to content sharing. It is important to be excited of social media, but it is equally important to know when to keep cool. Tolvanen and Pippuri concluded to be active and to choose the proper channels for engaging with the target market. (Tolvanen 2014.)

Expert #1 gave three short but efficient recommendations: less is more, find your own voice, and before anything it is important to do lots of research. The one advice all three experts had in common was outlining where the customers already are, what they talk about, and what they are interested in. This research needs to be done before anything in social media. Even if deciding not to pursue social media as a marketing channel, researches should be conducted about what is being said about the company on the web. (Expert #1 2015.)

Depending on the company's industry and the available resources, it might be wise to start in social media right from the beginning of putting up a company. In some sectors, social media can be a way to stand out from competitors, make sales and get a good start to operations. In some circumstances, investment in social media can be totally pointless in the early stages of running a business. For entrepreneurs it is important to remember the traces social media leaves behind and thinking ahead of what to answer in tight situations will be useful. Planning and executing an effective social media plan

takes time and resources. For an entrepreneur, this might be often forgotten. (Pippuri 2014; Tolvanen 2014; Expert #1 2015.)

Although there are lots of channels to take part in, companies need to be careful in extending their social media measures. The image of the company may become shattered and controlling all of the channels difficult. There must be a good amount of resources put in to the planning and implementing social media marketing. A good means of advice can also come from friends and family. They might have surprising ideas on how to execute a certain marketing aspect. (Pippuri 2014; Tolvanen 2014; Expert #1 2015.)

The future of social media is constantly evolving in a fast pace. The direction of the future is hard to predict: platforms grow and differentiate towards even smaller target groups. It will become a bigger part of everyday life, but mostly a main channel to do business in. On the other hand, social media can take a totally different turn. Facebook has already seen a slight setback in being the dominant marketing channel, so the focus is going to be changed somewhere else. (Pippuri 2014; Tolvanen 2014; Expert #1 2015.)

3.3 Possibilities of utilizing social media for Anneli Lariviere Photography

Anneli Lariviere Photography, a new photography company in Tampere, Finland, commissioned this thesis. The company is specialized in family portrait and lifestyle photography in a natural light. The photos capture honest moments and emotions and portray the family as they are. (Lariviere 2014.)

Anneli Lariviere Photography already has a Facebook-page where the user updates on new blog posts written in the company blog. The page was active in the beginning, but has not been updated in weeks. Lariviere has been seeking ways to keep her clients engaged and interested, but has difficulties finding ideas on execution. As Lariviere is originally from The United States, she has also been having a problematic time contacting Finnish customers in the social media outlet.



PICTURE 2. Screenshot of the latest Facebook-post by Anneli Lariviere Photography (Facebook 2014).

3.3.1 Campaign outline and marketing analysis

The campaign proposal is based on information assembled about the different forms of social media marketing and popular social media platforms, and how to use them in a respective way. The knowledge was brought together and thus formed a suitable campaign for a startup photography business in Finland.

The main goal of the campaign is to attract and gain new fans, thus having an advanced potential for new clients. Another important aspect of the campaign is to get exposure and gain a sort of reputation for quality lifestyle photography in the Tampere region. The campaign should raise awareness, forming a photographer anyone could identify with, but also gain new “likes” and followers.

The strategy on how to achieve these goals is to identify which platforms are most suitable for photographers in Finland and selecting the target audience based on what social

media platforms they often use. The ideal outcome would be to achieve more paying clients and gain a positive reputation in the photography business.

Table 8 shows Lariviere has already conducted a broad SWOT-analysis to help define her strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It has helped her view the need of the market, but also the competition.

Table 8. SWOT analysis of Anneli Lariviere Photography (Anneli Lariviere Photography 2015).

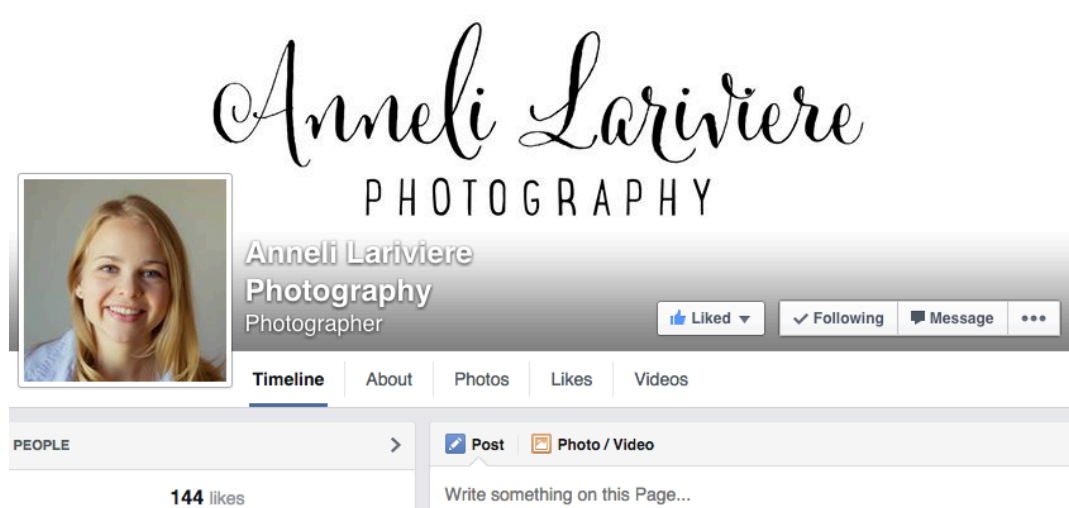
Strengths: Persistence and determination. Motivation, talent in photography and having a creative mindset. Having the necessary equipment to start a photography company.	Opportunities: The possibility of growth, especially in the influences of trends and influences from other countries. Ability to add products and with new equipment; an ability to photograph different events.
Weaknesses: Has not gained experience as an entrepreneur, does not have high quality equipment, and lots of competition in the field.	Threats: Amount of competitions in the field of photography and generally the poor economic condition.

The marketing plan includes the marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion), which will in turn help to define how the marketing will be implemented. The product in question is the distinguished way of photography executed by Anneli Lariviere. The place can be defined as the whole Pirkanmaa-region. It is stated in the company web page that travelling inside Tampere to different locations does not yield a higher price (Anneli Lariviere Photography 2015).

The pricing is straightforward: 175 euros for family photography session, 225 euros for newborn and infant photography sessions. The information conducted in gathering the right price is done in an extensive manner. Lariviere has studied the pricing in other similar photography companies in the Tampere-region, but also in Finland in a whole. (Anneli Lariviere Photography 2015.) Promotion is to be conducted in the next paragraphs, but the focus will be in social media because of the excessive reach to possible customers but also the low level of costs.

3.3.2 Campaign proposal in social media

As stated in chapter 2.2.1, Facebook is the most popular social media platform there is. Having such a wide variety of users, it is possible to be in straight contact with lots of potential customers. On the other hand, there is a lot of clutter on Facebook, so the main goal for using this platform is to produce high-quality and relevant content for potential consumers. It is also important to stay in contact rapidly with customers, answering their comments and questions.



PICTURE 3. Current Facebook-page for Anneli Lariviere Photography (Facebook 2014).

For the Facebook status updates to be relevant and interesting to customers, there needs to be a clear thought on what to post. Uploading photos of a behind the scenes photoshoot, manufacturing small competitions, giving customer tips and sharing inspiring content are just the tip of the iceberg. It is important to stay relevant by being in touch with other photography Facebook-pages.

As a business user on Facebook, it is to be understood that posting everyday meaningless and dull content will only drive customers away. Studies have shown posting a maximum of once per day is the ideal situation (Lee, 2014). More posts would only be of negative impact and not get the engagement intended. Blog posts on the company website will become a regular (once a week) and they will be updated on Facebook as they come. Ideas of posts will be discussed beforehand and they will be prepared in a

time-efficient manner, putting emphasis on relevancy and importance. The company website already has a share-button and as stated in chapter 2.4 as one of the rules of SMO, it is essential to make sharing easy for potential customers.



PICTURE 4. Screenshot of Anneli Lariviere –company blog, emphasizing on the share-button (Anneli Lariviere Photography, 2015).

In chapter 2.2.7, it is stated Pinterest being a platform where users frequently go to for inspiration on photography, wedding ideas, recipes, home décor, etc. On the business side, Pinterest is a fun and easy way for a company to share taken photographs. Boards such as wedding ideas, what to wear for engagement sessions, hairstyles and makeup ideas, photography tips and articles, photography shooting tips and a seasonal winter/autumn/spring/summer are always popular among “pinners”.



PICTURE 5. Anneli Lariviere Photography –Pinterest page (Pinterest 2014).

Pinterest is the main go-to social media platform besides Facebook that the company will be using. Pinterest thrives on inspirational pictures, thus deriving more traffic to the original website, www.annelilariviere.fi. The target client being a 25-40 year old female with a family, having a good livelihood and being on the edge of trends, the Pinterest clientele is the perfect choice. (Ahalogy 2014.)

Google+ and Instagram are correspondingly in the campaign proposal. Google+ for the photography communities and the search engine optimization it brings. Although Instagram has had a bad reputation for some professional photographers, it can also be a gold mine for finding new talent. As figure 12 states, Finnish customers still favor Instagram over Twitter or Pinterest, so content quality needs to be present on Instagram also, concentrating on popular but useful hashtags and relevant photos (Bennett, 2014).

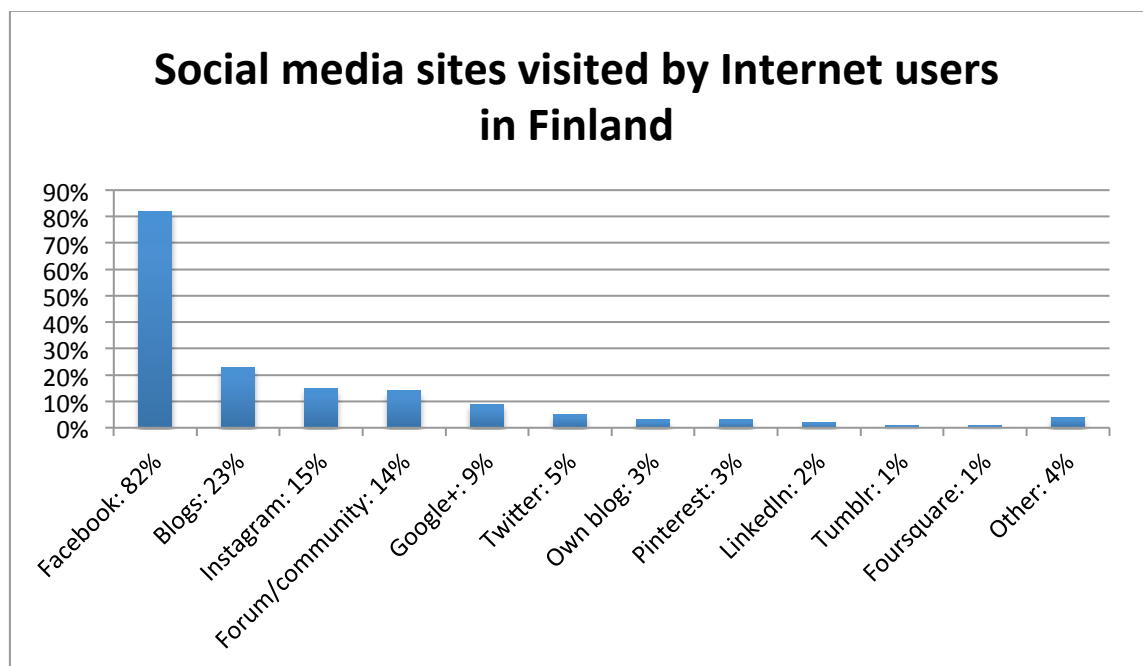


FIGURE 12. Social media sites visited by Internet users in Finland (Bennett, 2014).

Other social media platforms, mainly Twitter and LinkedIn, are to be left out of the marketing plan. Twitter has very few uses in Finland and the target market does not use Twitter to find new photography companies. LinkedIn is a professional platform, and within time and new clientele it may be appropriate to establish a business page in the site. As for the time being, LinkedIn is unnecessary.

4 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The thesis focused firstly on marketing concepts and secondly on what is social media, what is the perception of it with marketing professionals, and how various platforms can be conducted to help a company. There was no special attention given to a specific social media outlet, but less concentration was with Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vine, simply because they were not suitable for the commissioned company. Only 8 social media platforms were introduced because of the vast amount of them on the Internet. They are also in a constant change, so only the ones that have been around for a suitable amount of time were taken upon into further examination.

The second part of the thesis concentrated on the expert interviews as well as the commissioner Anneli Lariviere Photography. The interviews are unraveled and from the results certain arguments are made. There is a brief introduction of the company, followed by the overall problem it is having and what Lariviere would like to achieve via social media marketing.

Based on the needs of the commissioned company, an outline for social media marketing was made and social media experts were interviewed to grasp a holistic idea on how the market is perceived. Centered on literature reviews and interview results, guidelines for the photography company were made. The idea behind only focusing on certain social media platforms was to emphasize on only the ones that are relevant for a photography company based in Finland.

It was important to draw more traffic to the website, Facebook and also Pinterest –pages of the company. The interviews, as well as social media optimization rules, signified content quality in being an important aspect on generating traffic. It was agreed upon that blog posts were to be designed beforehand, emphasizing on quality and attractiveness for potential customers. Another noteworthy aspect in the rules of SMO was making content sharing easy, which was executed by having a “Share”-button on the website. This enabled distribution on Twitter, Pinterest, but also Facebook.

The guideline offers important concepts regarding social media generally as well as offering ideas on how to incorporate the most important social media platforms in the

company. If taken further, there could have been results on how the proposed plan was executed and what the results were. It is vital for companies to first search what kind of social media possibilities are out there, then start thinking of the goals wanted from social media marketing, search for references on how clientele acts in the target market and then use social media in real time, not forgetting about quality in content.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview

Interview questionnaire with Ainomaija Pippuri

1 (3)

1. What is your general perception on social media?

The meaning of social media is increasing on a daily basis – both in my job in business communication and in my own personal life. The amount of channels in social media is growing and the pace of development is huge. In the point of view of corporate communications we live in interesting times and all of the companies are forced to take social media into their marketing and communication planning.

2. Do you consider social media as a relevant tool for marketing?

See the previous answer.

3. What do you think are the benefits of social media marketing?

As I am the head of external communications at If P&C, I can only speak for myself. My answer does not cover the viewpoint of the whole marketing section. In external communication social media allows us to interact and have an open dialogue with our customers. Various social media channels allow the company the chance to produce different content that our customers are genuinely interested in, but the allocation of the selected channel needs to be accurate.

4. What about the challenges of social media marketing?

The conversations in social media are impossible to “control”. Also it is important to be ready to participate in critical discussions and crises.

5. What are your top 3 advices for businesses going in to the social media market?

a. Think carefully what are the objectives of the business in social media: what are the platforms to be involved in, what channels do the customers use.

b. Be active: listen to the customers and participate in the discussion.

(continues)

Interview questionnaire with Ainomaija Pippuri. 2 (3)

c. Ask for feedback from the customers about social media and develop activities constantly: what kind of content are the customers interested in, how to develop and differentiate from the competitors?

6. What should businesses be wary of when going in to social media?

Be careful in extending your social media outlet to too many platforms or being too fragmented in the channels. It is important to be skilled and possess a good sense of discretion in conversations with customers.

7. Do you think social media is still a fairly new concept or has it stabilized itself in the business world?

Social media has certainly established itself as a communication and marketing channel with the bigger industries.

8. In your opinion, has social media come to the end of the line or is there still more for us to learn?

There is definitely more to learn. Social media and its channels are developing all the time.

9. What do you think is the future of social media? What direction is it going?

Social media is developing all the time rapidly. It is hard to determine which way it is going: the platforms are growing and it is concentrating on even smaller target groups.

10. What is your advice for small businesses getting started? Should they tackle social media right in the beginning, or after a few years in the business?

The industry and available resources have a huge role. In some sectors, social media can be a way to stand out from competitors, make sales and get a good start up for

(continues)

Interview questionnaire with Ainomaija Pippuri.

3 (3)

the general operations. In some situations investment in social media can be completely pointless in the early stages of starting a business.

Appendix 2. Interview

Interview questionnaire with Annariina Tolvanen

1 (2)

1. What is your general perception on social media?

Social media makes the world smaller in a good way, it connects people around the world, and makes it possible for us to explore places we couldn't explore before and helps our everyday lives. I just love it!

2. Do you consider social media as a relevant tool for marketing?

Definitely.

3. What do you think are the benefits of social media marketing?

You are able to target locally or worldwide, and reach people who have shown their interest towards your business. It is very cost effective, and you might reach new target groups through these channels as well. I think no business can live without social media anymore.

4. What about the challenges of social media marketing?

It is quite impossible to master. Social Media encourages people to show their opinions, and sometimes this may cause problems. In case you don't really know what you are doing, you might just waste your time, and money at the same time. Social media marketing is not as easy as it seems; it takes time, and needs quite a lot of work in the background to look effortless and fun for the followers.

5. What are your top 3 advices for businesses going in to the social media market?

- Build a proper story; you have to live your brand through social media channels, and try to engage people to follow you along the way. Story telling is the key.
- Keep your cool. Don't push, annoy or get too excited about social media; you should show what you've got and let the crowd come to you. Focus on quality, not quantity when it comes to the content you're sharing

(continues)

Interview questionnaire with Annariina Tolvanen. 2 (2)

- Choose the channels where your target audience is. Do your research and monitor what's working and what's not.

6. What should businesses be wary of when going in to social media?

There's no need to be scared of social media but it's good to think before acting. You cannot really take back anything.

7. Do you think social media is still a fairly new concept or has it stabilized itself in the business world?

It is a new one, but it has already stabilized its place. I cannot think about a business that has no need to be in social media anymore.

8. In your opinion, has social media come to the end of the line or is there still more for us to learn?

It has just started! It will develop every day, there will be new applications all the time and most of them will be linked together somehow helping us in our everyday lives.

9. What do you think is the future of social media? What direction is it going?

I think social media will be even bigger part of our lives, and it will be one of the main channels to do business. When someone recommends a product you are more likely to buy it rather than you would see an ad.

10. What is your advice for small businesses getting started? Should they tackle social media right in the beginning, or after a few years in the business?

Start right away, but don't try to do all at once. Open the channels and make a good plan how to connect them together. Build a proper story and you'll be better than most of your competitors.

Appendix 3. Interview

Interview questionnaire with Expert #1.

1 (3)

1. What is your general perception on social media?

In a short amount of time it has become a significant marketing channel. If you are not in social media, you don't exist in the digital world. It is more of an exception if you do not have your own social media footprint. Nowadays it feels as if everyone is in social media, but the hype has ended. Social media is now just one channel where companies can (independently and in a different way) reach their target market.

2. Do you consider social media as a relevant tool for marketing?

The relevancy is in the fact that more and more people want to be in an interaction with them. It is the same principle with companies and their target market. Social media gives a chance to interact, but also listen to customers. The interaction is now a way of communication, a two-way street. Social media is now being used more and more to answer customers and marketing is not exclusively television or radio –advertisements, but marketing can now be perceived on how to deal with customers. We have now begun to move from phone calls, to conversations on the Internet.

3. What do you think are the benefits of social media marketing?

Before marketing was the thought that the company with the largest amount of money can do the most. Nowadays capital is not as important, but using your own imagination social media marketing can be very cost-effective.

4. What about the challenges of social media marketing?

Anyone can understand the interactions with people in social media, but there needs to be some understanding in technology also. You need to have wisdom in computers, because of all the trends, apps, and new social media tools. The technological aspect brings also challenges. It needs to be understood that Google does not forget. Everything can be traced back. Social media can be thought as if it was painting a picture of your digital footprint that cannot be erased easily. In social media it is not as easy to

(continues)

Interview questionnaire with Expert #1.

2 (3)

control, for example, marketing campaigns. It is not as easy to control your own doings either. There needs to be an understanding that the consumers have a lot more power these days and they can reach out in social media and get their voices heard if they want to.

A smaller challenge is to understand what to do in social media. There are a lot of options, so the key is to execute only one thing well and then move on to others. The need to find your own social media platform is crucial; no-one can control all of them in the beginning.

5. What are your top 3 advices for businesses going in to the social media market?

Less is more. Find your own voice. Before you start doing anything, do lots of research on the web. Try to outline where your customers are already, what do they talk about and where, what are they interested in. You can reflect your own unique point of view afterwards.

Bonus advice: If you decide that social media is not the right marketing tool for your company, remember to investigate what customers are saying about you anyway. It is important information, only to be found on the Internet.

6. What should businesses be wary of when going in to social media?

If you are an entrepreneur: remember that you leave traces in social media. For example, there can be discussions on some forums, so instead of getting angry, remember how to handle it gracefully. You should also think about recourses: it can be easy to imagine you are not doing anything complicated, but the design and execution of a social media marketing plan takes time. Think about what resources you will use, every social media aspect needs planning, and that takes time but also money.

7. Do you think social media is still a fairly new concept or has it stabilized itself in the business world?

(continues)

Interview questionnaire with Expert #1.

3 (3)

It is not a new concept and it definitely has stabilized itself. Companies want employers to know how to use social media, but rarely do they themselves know how to use it.

8. In your opinion, has social media come to the end of the line or is there still more for us to learn?

Social media marketing has just begun. In Finland, these things tend to come slower than everywhere else. It has been predicted that videos will finally make their big breakthrough in social media marketing this year in Finland. In the rest of the world it has already happened years ago. The role of social media marketing will change in the future. Facebook has had a dominant role with company marketing, but that will probably change soon. The focus will be more in company's own homepages, how to execute them with style and provide useful information for customers.

9. What do you think is the future of social media? What direction is it going?

Look above answer. There will be different ways to communicate with target markets. 4-5 years ago it was easy on Facebook, but today you need to have more tools for communication. Company's need to be on top of what is trendy at the moment, what services are popular, but also what the competitors are doing and take advantage of their examples. We are going into a more visual advancement and companies can now make their own pictures or infographs.

10. What is your advice for small businesses getting started? Should they tackle social media right in the beginning, or after a few years in the business?

Have a budget for marketing, and plan a good but efficient marketing plan. In the beginning try to get help from friends and family, and ask for their opinion. They could have really great ideas you have not thought of. It is easy to fall in love with your own ideas; a different viewpoint is thus always welcome.