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Abstract

As the field of media is constantly developing due to different technological changes, the companies are fronted with various challenges and opportunities. This thesis tried to find out how the discussion forums could serve the company as customers informing each other, as a word of mouth marketing method, as a medium for the company to find out about the opinions of their customers, or as a way of actively gathering feedback from the customers. The sub purposes of the thesis searched to evaluate how social media is utilized in the case company and why and secondly to examine how the case company is visible in selected discussion forums.

First themed interviews were done in the case company about communication, especially social media, to find out what kind of interest the company has towards the social media and how the company would hope to get benefits from through social media. In the second part of the study the analysis of discussions on internet discussion forums is done in seven different stages based on the stage model of qualitative research (Berg 2004). These include first scanning through the material in a general way and during that stage finding categories according to which the findings can be classified. The eleven categories ranged from level of service and the buying of flights to tourist information and company news. The categories found in this way are analyzed according to dimensions of new media gathered from the study of Van Dijk (2006).

Benefits of using discussion forums as a part of its communications include taking advantage of information that already exists and having customers create information for other customers instead of the company which can save the company's resources. The risks that amongst others should be considered because they can cause erroneous understanding of messages of the information found include for example that the company is not able to follow all that happens in internet discussions and its participation in them is very problematic, the posts might not present the true opinion of the person and the view of the users does not represent the general views of all the consumers. The above along with other issues makes the consistent following of discussion forums difficult.

Key words	social media, new media, corporate communications
Further information	