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# FORMING A SOCIA MEDIA MARKETING STRATEGY

## Increasing product awareness and generating leads for a startup company in diving industry

Master´s Thesis
in Information Systems Science


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# Table of Contents

# List of figures

# List of tables

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Motivation

Typically for many people, social media is a way to keep in touch with friends and share content of varying kind. While the main goal of many social media channels is to allow users to share and communicate with each other, social media can also be used by companies in achieving multiple goals. The ample amount of different social media channels and the ever-increasing user base offers an exceedingly appealing medium for companies to engage with. McCann and Barlow (2015) have studied the benefits of social media for small to medium sized companies and according to them, social media offers an extensive array of possible benefits for companies to exploit (Figure 1). According to their research better communication with customers, increased brand awareness and better promotion opportunities are some of the perceived benefits of engaging is social media (McCann & Barlow, 2015, p. 11).
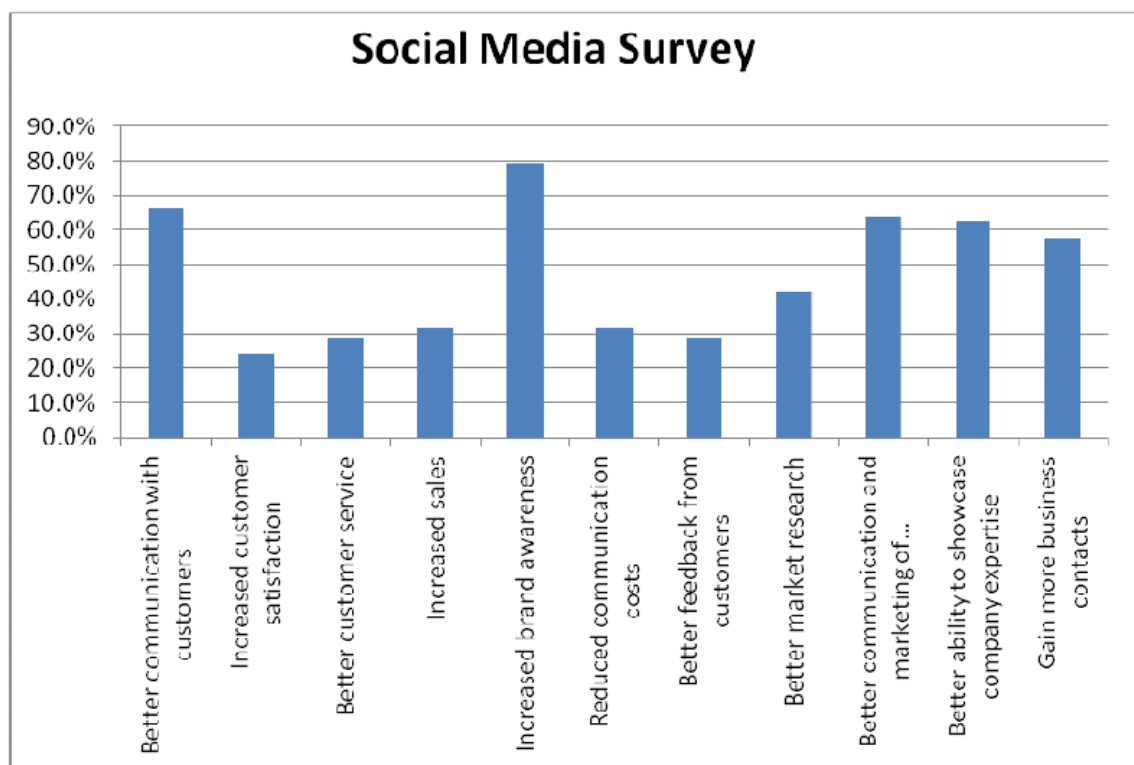
Figure 1: Benefits of social media as perceived by SMEs (McCann & Barlow, 2015, p. 11)

There are plenty of studies and real world examples proving the positive possibilities of social media. Campaigns performed by AirAsia and Oreo are one of many instances

where leveraging social media characteristics have resulted in a tremendous success (Bhattacharya, 2016 & Gavronski, 2013). Even when the advantages are clearly visible and called among the media, some companies in business-to-business context still doubt the probable gains of social media. Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides (2011) conducted a study about the usage of social media channels among small to medium sized business-to-business (B2B) companies. The findings revealed that firms are reluctant to engage in social media due to perceived irrelevance of social media and the industry activities in B2B context (Michaelidou et al., 2011, p. 19). Academic study has previously focused on the building blocks and mechanics of social media channels, but there seems to be lack of concrete guidance for companies that are willing to engage in social media. This study aims to collect the information concerning the mechanics of social media, but also to study how companies should engage in social media. The goal is to provide a detailed social media marketing strategy for a Finnish startup company called Underwater Information Systems (UWIS). The company operates in B2B context and is launching a new product in the early autumn of 2017. The product enables underwater navigation, similar to that of GPS tracking, to scuba divers. The created system is among first of its kind to bring location services to diving industry and UWIS has decided to include social media as one of their primary marketing approach.

This study focuses on creating a comprehensive social media marketing plan for UWIS for the first six months of their active social media participation. The plan will cover the strategy of engaging is social media as well as introducing some key-aspects of how to effectively find relevant information and interact with potential customers online. The study reviews the existing social media channels and the industry leaders that populate the social media space. Through interviews, case studies and academic and non-academic literature on social media utilization, this research studies the most useful channels for UWIS to use and some of the best practices that they should adopt to efficiently reach their customers and engage them. While providing an overall strategy for applying on social media marketing, this study introduces the very important concept of social media listening. Furthermore the social media marketing plan provides UWIS with additional tools to research diving industry on social media and a framework for analyzing the activities suggested in the plan. The focus is on diving industry and how UWIS can attract and engage their customers in that field of business. Nevertheless, the collected literature and research is potentially beneficial to every company taking their first steps with social media.

This study and its material are limited to creating, utilizing and analyzing social media as a marketing tool. The emphasis is to find the best ways to engage with social media users and thus raise the awareness of UWIS's product. The purpose is to find out how to leverage the company blog and other activities conducted by UWIS on social media. This means that even though this study centers its attention on social media mar-

keting, it does not account for campaign marketing on social media or studies about paid marketing in social media. The focus is on studying content that is perceived interesting by the target audience and how should UWIS concentrate their social media efforts around said content. This information is used to create a base for future social media activities in a clear and understandable way, so that UWIS is able to comfortably manage their social media channels, analyze the audience in them and operate accordingly.

## 1.2 UWIS

UWIS was founded in 2014 and is based in the city of Turku, Finland. The company houses only a few employees committed in making scuba diving a safer and controlled experience. The product is still in development, though it should be available later during the year 2017. The whole system comprises three or more floating buoys and all the monitored divers must wear a small piece of equipment during the dive. The buoys are equipped with GPS, wireless communication and the capability to convey sonar pulses. The small pieces of equipment worn by divers are capable of receiving and sending sonar pulses. The data transmitted between these devices can be monitored and controlled via smart device.

The aim of the system is to enable scuba divers and people above water to see the absolute and relative 3D positions of the divers. The technology would bring substantial benefits to security and minimize some the inconveniences that appear when diving underwater. This can be achieved because divers and crew members are aware of every diver's positions and interactions are possible through automated or manual messages. With the help of this new system, divers not only locate their fellow divers better but can also communicate with them by sending messages, locations, directions and positions. This also applies to surface crew so they can monitor and influence the dive if they so wish.

This type of solution hasn't been available for general audience before this and UWIS is not the only one trying to be in the front of innovation. Competitive technologies are being developed at the same time so UWIS is in a hurry to capture the interest of possible customers. Since the company is still in its startup phase and the product is still under development, creating connections and sale leads is only now starting to be current. Because the size of the company and the state they are at the moment, the resources for marketing are limited. In order to make the most out of what they have, the company has decided to utilize social media as an important marketing medium.

## 1.3    Research question

The aim of this thesis is to provide UWIS the information they require to effectively use social media to create an interactive platform for customers and potential customers, bringing additional value to them while also raising product awareness, thus ultimately increasing sales. The desired aim and this thesis already postulate that social media can be effectively used to reach all the above mentioned goals. A great amount of research is done in the field of social media marketing and even though keeping in mind that some caveats do occur, social media can be very effective medium in raising customer engagement. Dijkmans, Kerkhof and Beukeboom (2015, 8) found in their research that "engagement in company social media activities is positively related to corporate reputation, especially among non-customers". Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 9) also state in their research that social media enables firms to engage with their customers directly with little delay and great efficiency compared to traditional communication tools. Corporate blogs, when created with care, can drastically influence the attitudes and motives of readers have towards the company (Koenig & Schlagel, 2014, p. 27). When studying consumer-brand knowledge and brand emotions Sinha, Ajuha and Medury (2011, 13) concluded that when brand recognition increases through social media so does emotional connection to the brand. Furthermore there is no significant difference whether the brand content is functional or emotional in nature. These findings indicate that engaging in social media can be executed in very different ways and using varying strategies, while still resulting in with positive effects.

Because the potential of social media has been proved in academic studies and we can see this effectiveness happening on social media channels all around us, this research focuses more on what methods should be applied and why these methods tend to work as they do. While keeping in mind how the found information can be used by UWIS. Majority of the literature used in this study strongly relate to social media utilization for companies and social media marketing. The material revolves around on how social media channels and their users tend to operate and how should companies exploit the interactions made by users. Because UWIS is embodies itself mostly as a single product, the research centers on how products can be promoted via social media. Therefore the background work includes examining the most efficient ways to do this on social media. Using the gathered information the final objective is to create a social media marketing strategy for UWIS that can be applied to use instantly, while being manageable in the future. Thus, the research question is the following:

- How to construct an effective social media marketing strategy for a business-to-business startup company in the diving industry?

## 2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Social media

Social media has been around in some forms for many decades. In 1979 Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis created the Usenet, which enabled users to post public messages into one or more categories. Other users would then be able to read these messages (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 2). The Usenet can be considered as predecessor to internet forums that are still very much in use today. From those forums a myriad of different social media platforms and applications with different functionalities and features have been developed. The definition of social media is exceedingly broad, since many applications and many sites over the internet incorporate at least some social aspects. Ashley and Tuten (2015) view social media as "online channels for sharing and participating in a variety of activities" (Ashley & Tuten, 2015, p. 1) while Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) regard social media as anything that incorporates user generated content, that being content generated by the users of a particular site, not the administrators or developers of said site (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 3).

Social media has become a big part of billions of people's lives. According to study performed by Smartinsights (2016) there are roughly 2,307 billion active social media users in the world. The numbers have been increasing over the years and between 2015 and 2016 about 219 million people joined the ranks of active social media users (Figure 2). ComScore (2016), an American media measurement and statistics company have also conducted a study on social media interests. Their study from 2016 shows that social media is one most used medium when talking about digital content. The analysis also reveals how much time on average a person uses on some of the most popular social media applications (Figure 3). The numbers show that social media is a medium well worth the attention it has received.



Figure 2: Global digital snapshot & Annual growth. (Smartinsights, 2016, p. 2).

**Share of Total Digital Time Spent by Content Category**
Source: comScore Media Metrix Multi-Platform, U.S., Total Audience, December 2015
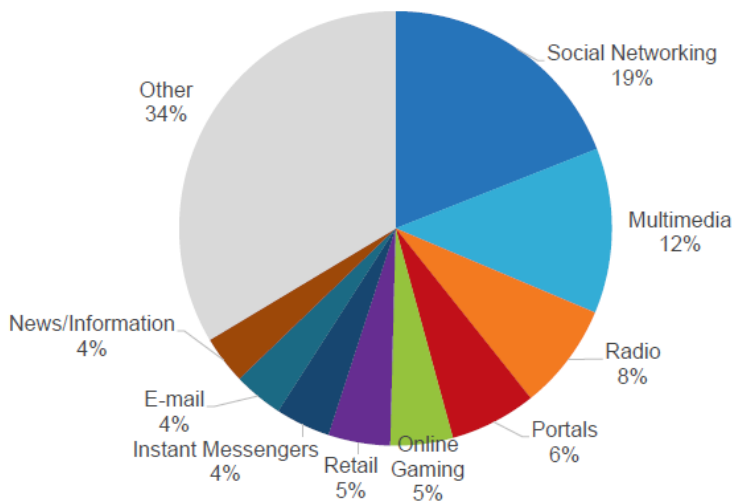


comSCORE

**Age 18-34 Digital Audience Penetration vs. Engagement of Leading Social Networks**
Source: comScore Media Metrix Multi-Platform, U.S., Dec 2015
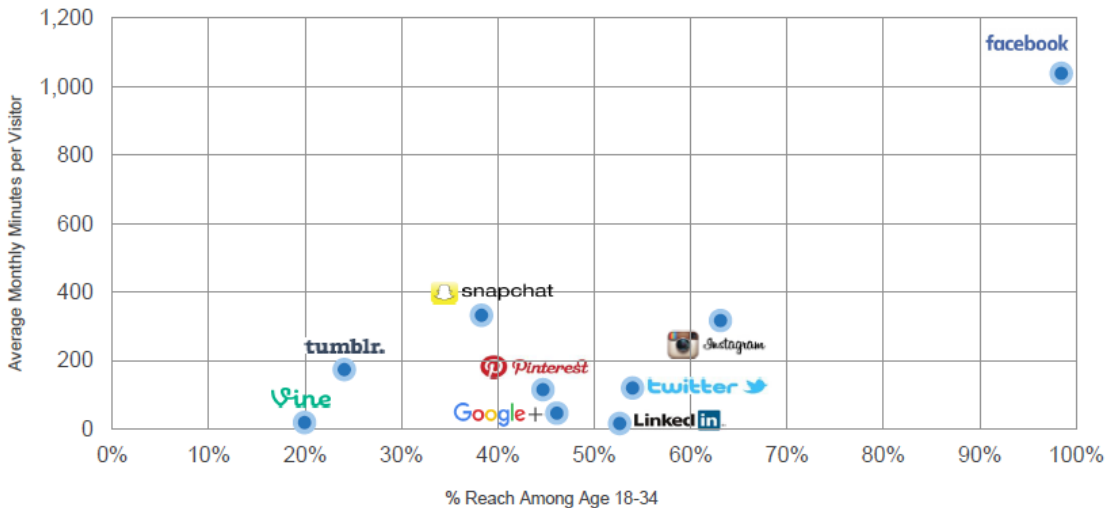


comSCORE

Figure 3: Time spent by content & Digital audience penetration vs. Engagement
(ComScore, 2016, p. 29 & 31)

As Figure 3 shows, Facebook rests high above all other social media networks when measuring users and time spent. Other remarkably popular social media include YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and relative new platforms Pinterest and Snapchat. When taking into account the full spectrum of channels that can be called social media, Wikipedia, WhatsApp and Reddit are also examples of widely popular services. All of them offer different ways to interact with other people but they all share the similar capabilities of giving users the possibility of creating original content which other users can interact with. The social media platforms have also started to heavily migrate from desktop to mobile devices. As the use of smart devices has increased during the last

decade, so have the opportunities to interact with other people. Practically all major social media channels have their own mobile application and with almost 80% of social media consuming happens on mobile devices, this is the most important platform when designing social media marketing (Lister, 2016, p. 3).

Social media channels have become increasingly popular over the last decade and there has been some examination among academic literature on the reasons. The main incentives for joining a social media channel are usually keeping contact with friends, getting new acquaintances and search for information. Gangadharbatla (2008, 6) suggests that one significant reason is also the need to be a part of a network and feel approved by the network. A study conducted by Livingstone (2008, 8) reached somewhat similar conclusion when stating that for younger people, creating content and networking on the internet are essential parts of creating ones identity, lifestyle and contacts. It is also important to remark that when people join to network they bring their existing human capital with them (Kadushin, 2004, p. 34). This means that all the experience, education and characteristics are also introduced and added to that network. This can be hugely beneficial to some individuals of the network, since they now have capabilities to interact with people beneficial to them. LinkedIn is a social media service that mainly exploits this idea. One other prominent reason for people to join a social media service is called threshold or tipping point. This means in a social media service that when a critical mass of users is achieved, more users will join the service just because so many others have already joined (Valente, 1996, p. 3).

## 2.2     Why engaging users in social media is beneficial for companies

As practice has clearly shown, social media has the potential to inform and engage tremendous amounts of people. Companies have also noticed this engagement potential and have started to bring their own presence online. The amount of brand followers on social media demonstrates that consumers tend to follow brands they are interested in. Several studies have also stated similar results (Keller, 2001, p. 4, Schiviski & Dabrowski, 2016, p. 14 and Hudson et al, p. 2015, p. 11). It would seem that social media users are neglecting traditional media in favor of social media channels in search of information and assessments towards a product or a brand (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 4, Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011, p. 1).  Studies have also stated that digital media is not only for purposes of product and service research, but consumers engage with both the company they buy from and other consumers who might have valuable insights (Garretson, 2008, p. 12). Social media offers many ways to encourage this behavior. Facebook allows the forming of different groups which allows companies to easily and effectively segment their audience in a way that is beneficial to social media users as

well. YouTube and Pinterest offer the possibility of categorizing content the user likes so that only the presumably desired material is shown. There are numerous ways to engage with customers and promote business, but as Hutter et al. (2013) conclude in their research, surprisingly many companies only use social media to collect information about their customers and learn about their attitudes. The authors emphasize that while those actions are also completely reasonable, social media is a tremendously effective marketing platform and when utilized with care, can provide several positive effects on the company (Hutter et al., 2013, p. 8).

The rise of social media as a marketing tool has also disrupted the perceived viability of traditional marketing means (e.g. TV-commercials, billboards, paper advertisements and so forth). A study conducted by Nielsen's Global Trust gives the perception of traditional media as unpractical. According to their survey, slightly less than half of the 28 000 respondents consider television, magazine and newspaper advertisements trustworthy. In the years between 2009 and 2011 the confidence has declined by the rate of roughly 23 percent (Nielsen, 2012, p. 1). This has lead to situations where some companies have mostly abandoned traditional marketing methods in favor of the more affordable and modern social media marketing. Even though the numbers can be seen as a warning signal, numerous other studies have shown that in order to effectively market a product and increase brand value, traditional marketing is crucial. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011, 8-9) include the use of traditional forms of marketing as an essential piece of keeping up the momentum in viral marketing. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) conclude in their research that "social media campaigns should not he used as a substitute for traditional advertising, but rather be treated as an element of the company's marketing communication strategy." (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016, p. 15). In line with the previous quote, Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011) argue that many companies treat traditional media and social media channels and strategies as separate entities that don't interact with one another. They also state that social media should be viewed as a part of a greater whole that is exceptionally good at accentuating consumer experience, but does not replace traditional media (Hanna et al., 2011, p. 4).

So even though traditional marketing should not be forgotten, social media channels offer many positive effects that make it very appealing for companies. Social media provides direct and fast way to communicate with existing follower base. Facebook has a messaging application and practically every social media channel apply some platform for commenting and responding. Furthermore, this interaction also allows companies to provide customer service to everyone, even non-customers. Social media supported customer service can be a very strong aspect in building a positive image of the company. Studies have shown that "conversational human voice" is positively regarded by readers (Kelleher & Miller, 2006, p. 16) and adds value for brand evaluation (Van Noort & Willemsen, 2011, p. 8) and sincerity in company-to-customer conversations have shown

to increase trust and familiarity (Lee, Hwang & Lee, 2006, p. 16). Upholding an active customer service will increase the chances of gaining a customer who is pleased by the service which in turn may inspire that particular user to become a brand advocate. This means that these types of users actively share opinions about brands and products with other users (Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright 2008, p. 7-8). Positive experiences are also likely to increase brand loyalty and referrals (Schiviski & Dabrowski, 2016, p. 14 and Hudson et al, p. 2015, p. 11). All these components will likely have a positive impact on revenues and profits (Sashi, 2011, p. 11). Having a two-way interaction also helps the company to understand their customers better (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009, p. 8 and Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015, p. 9). What they like and how they behave on social media. This information can be further exploited with the ability to segment people inside social media channels. Facebook and LinkedIn offer immensely popular group tool, that lets users create groups of likeminded people. YouTube and Twitter lets users create lists that can be followed by other users. Separating audience gives the audience a better chance to engage what they feel interesting and this may lead to positive experiences towards the company. Interaction within these channels greatly increases the chances of positive customer biases which are more likely to induce a positive outcome when a person is making a purchase decision.

As Hinz, Skeira, Barrot and Becker (2011) conclude in their study, the new course of interaction pose new challenges and opportunities for companies because the communication between users online. It would unquestionably seem that people tend to rely heavily on their social networks when making an impactful decision (Hinz et al., 2011, p. 31). The valuable opportunity in this kind of behavior offers a possibility for companies to influence these groups or individuals. By building a positive brand image and product awareness, companies can persuade the influencers in a way that is beneficial to them in the long term. The aim in building a brand is to convey specific ideas and emotions towards that brand. The depth and breadth of brand awareness are terms used by researcher Kevin Keller (2001) in his many studies about brand creation and maintenance. This depth of brand awareness refers to "how easily customers can recall or recognize the brand" and breadth refers to "the range of purchase and consumption situations in which the brand comes to mind" (Keller, 2001, p. 14). One exceptionally effective way to increase brand depth and breadth is to create a company blog. While both B2C and B2B companies employ this tactic, for companies in B2B context, blogs are becoming a necessity. Corporate blogs can be a very valuable medium as a way to maintain relationships and increasing brand awareness (Brennan & Croft, 2012, p. 18). Blogs are also excellent way to provide two-way communication between employees, consumers and firm's stakeholders (Koenig & Schlaegel, 2014, p. 4). The USA based communications company AT&T, for example reached outstanding results with their Networking Exchange -blog. By examining the social media landscape in their industry,

engaging with influencers and providing relevant content for their users, AT&T succeeded in raising sales by almost half a hundred million and gained social media awareness beyond measure (Biehn, 2011, p. 2-3).

As social media channels present the opportunity for companies to publish their own content, the creative process and being in public may cause problems. Hutter et al. (2013) confirm in their study that even though Facebook fanpage had a positive effect on brand awareness, word-of-mouth activities and purchase intentions, the opposite effects can occur if the user is unhappy with the fanpage. In this situation customer annoyance towards a fanpage decreases the overall commitment and involvement of the customers (Hutter et al. 2013, p. 7). This means that flooding the social media channel with for example too much content, unsuitable content, uninteresting content or not enough content can lead to discontent users who quickly leave in order to follow something more suitable for them. It is also stated that company created content "does not affect the consumers' perceptions of brand value" (Schivinski et al. 2016, p. 15). What Schivinski et al. (2016) also deduct from their research is that while perceived brand value is unaffected by company-created content, brand value can be indirectly influenced by shaping the consumer's perception of brand attitude (Schivinski et al, 2016, p. 15). This means that content made by the company is essential for conveying the identity and tone of the brand that aims to shape the customer's view of the brand. As Schivinski et al. (2016) suggests, "The object of firm-created social media content is to increase consumer's brand awareness and brand attitudes" (Schivinski et al., 2016, p. 16). Shamma and Hassan (2009) share this view in their research. According to them, particularly non-customers, who have not yet engaged with a company in a meaningful way, are far more likely to be influenced by traditional advertisement and activities on social media (Shamma & Hassan, 2009, p. 9).

Then how do companies affect their perceived value of their brand and how do they convince customers that their product or service is the best one? Social media channels are all about communication between users. These platforms allow people to easily exchange ideas, thoughts and opinions and as we have briefly discussed in the previous segment, some of these individuals are considered thought-leaders or influencers. The interaction between social media users can be extremely powerful in changing the views of a large number of people and this type of behavior is encouraged by these social media channels (Duan, Gu & Whinston, 2008, p. 4). The multinational conglomerate General Electric conducted a study in 2012 focusing on consumers' attitudes towards shared content and paid content (e.g. advertisements) in social media. The study showed that when the same video was shared to them by others, 83 % of the people would rate the video as "creative" in comparison to people who would have seen it as an advertisement (Neff, 2012, p.1). Ogilvy, Google and TNS presented a study in the summer 2014 sharing additional information about consumer behavior and social media. The interview

concluded a list of top 10 most influential mediums (Bulbul, Gross, Shin & Katz, 2014, p. 6);

- Word of mouth (74 %)
- Retailers and store visits (69 %)
- YouTube videos (64 %)
- Twitter (61 %)
- Company/brand websites (59 %)
- Facebook (56 %)
- Pinterest (56 %)
- Newspapers and magazines (55 %)
- TV and movies (51 %)
- Search (51 %)

The list clearly shows that social media channels are remarkable sources of influence. Numerous other surveys and academic studies point out in the same direction. Nielsen, a statistics company stated in 2012 that among their 28 000 respondents 92 % told that they trusted word-of-mouth from friends and family. In addition 70 % reported that they trusted online reviews posted by other consumers (Nielsen, 2012, p. 20). A study conducted by Cruz and Mendelsohn (2010) for the Chadwick Martin Bailey in 2010 reported that once a social media user has become a fan or a follower a company, they are much more likely to buy and recommend the brand than if they aren't following (Cruz & Mendelsohn, 2010, p. 2). Academic studies involving social media effectiveness as a marketing platform include the works of Mislove et al. (2007) and Christodoulides (2009) for example. These studies show that social media is without a doubt impressive medium of influence (Mislove, Marcon, Gummadi, Druschel & Bhattacharjee, 2007, p. 12, Christodoulides, 2009, p. 4).

The effectiveness of social media comes from its ability to encourage users to share and interact. Companies in particular are interested in two concepts; user generated content (UGC) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). User generated content can be defined as "i) content that is made publicly available over the Internet, ii) content that reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) content created outside professional routines and practices" (OECD, 2007, p. 4). Electronic Word-of-mouth on the other hand is defined by "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004, p. 2). These two concepts have very much in common and more often than not they tend to overlap each other in practice. However, eWOM can be seen as a metric that companies aim towards. Having people talking about a product, service or a company is extremely influential in shaping peoples opinion and ideas, thus encouraging people to share as much as possible can help create a positive image towards a

product and beneficial bias towards the company. Moreover, UGC encompasses eWOM but also incorporates everything else users write, share or create on the internet and this doesn't have to associate a brand or a company in any way.

In this thesis the focus is more on UGC since it usually incorporates similar aspects as eWOM. When studying UGC's attributes and possible benefits, the findings also tend apply to eWOM as it shares the similar space of context and effects. For example when Muñiz and Schau (2011, 8) talk about how marketers should offer suitable content and information as well as listen and participate in UGC. Not only does this increase the likelihood of receiving more UGC but it also means same "amount" of eWOM has been created. Companies would do well to engage in an active interaction with social media users and the content these users create. As research states, this type of two-way communication nurtures brand loyalty and reduces service costs when solving product problems (Noble, Noble, and Adjei 2012, p. 7). Krishnamurthy and Dou (2008, 3) also share a similar view but note that UGC is a remarkable pool of ideas that companies should utilize. It is also shown that users involved with UGC further strengthen that individual's attitude towards UGC. This means that when users are met with a platform that hosts interesting and viable UGC for them, they are more likely to use that platform in the future. This puts a significant burden to the platform holder, since it is their challenge and responsibility to create that engaging platform (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008, p. 7).

When utilized effectively, UGC can have significant impact on company's brand value and awareness and also on the quality of the brand. Studies have shown that UGC is regarded as vastly more trustworthy compared to other types of communication (Christodoulides, Michaelidou & Argyriou, 2012, p. 2-3). This makes UGC much more effective than traditional marketing. It is also shown that users involved in UGC have a higher probability of being brand advocates (Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright 2008, p. 7-8). If social media efforts are successful enough UGC can propel the company's social media presence to unprecedented amount of success. Companies can try to achieve this situation by making the marketing message as viral as possible. A situation where "some forms of marketing message related to company, brand or product is transmitted in an exponentially growing way" is called viral marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 3). The authors Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) continue to state that viral marketing has must have two defining elements. The growth of a message must be more than one, meaning that a receiver of the message must convey that message to more than one person. The second element is that social media channels are used to make viral conditions possible (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 3). In order to effectively use viral marketing, companies have to understand how it works in practice. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) have formed a simple figure on how a viral outbreak of a message is usually originated (Figure 4).
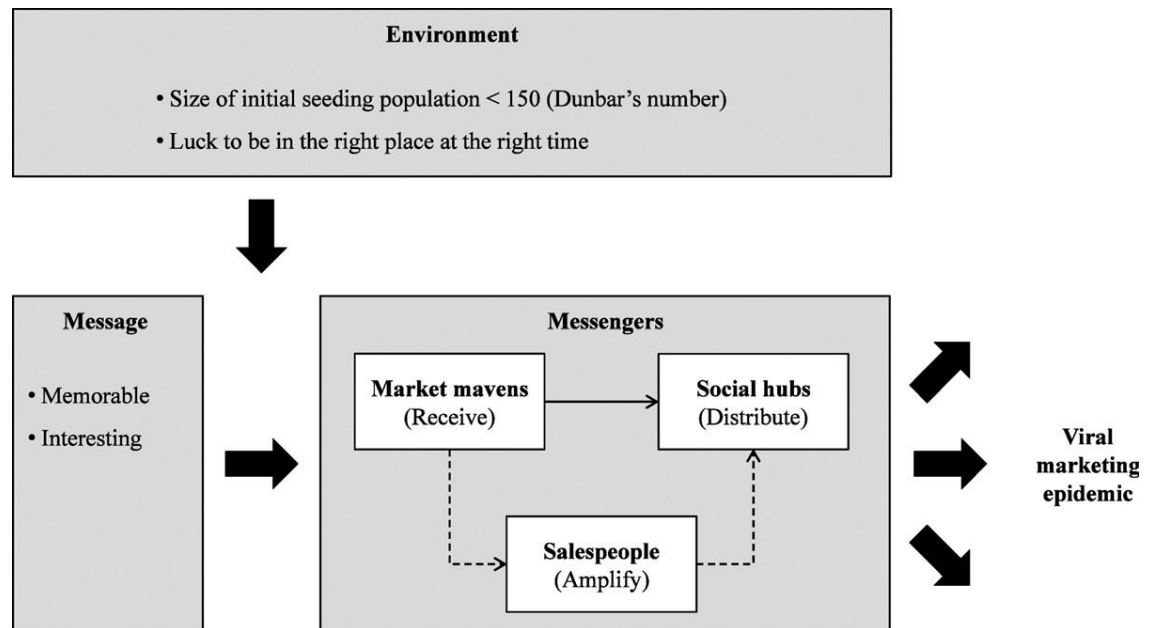
Figure 4: The three basic conditions for creating a viral marketing epidemic (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 4).

As the figure shows, creating a viral marketing epidemic is largely affected delivering a creative message and having a proper amount of luck and bravery to back that message. Of course companies can be able to create profitable conditions to spread a viral epidemic by having a considerable budget and talented creators. Volvo Trucks managed to create an exceptionally successful viral video in 2014, showing Jean-Claude Van Damme doing a split between two reversing trucks. The advertisement collected several awards and has been viewed at nearly 86 million times on YouTube making Volvo trucks one of the most successful brands ever to utilize social media on marketing (Griner, 2014, p. 1-2, 6). Jagermeister although, has proved that viral marketing has the potential to have the opposite effect as they experienced in 2013 when a marketing event ended up poisoning 9 people, one of which fell into coma for 18 days (Bowater, 2013, p. 1). These and other examples show that creating a viral marketing epidemic can be hugely profitable endeavor, but come with caveats that can be too big for companies to overcome.

## 2.3    Understanding and engaging on social media channels

How can companies tap into all the possible benefits that social media represents? As practice has shown, not all companies are thriving just because they have social media presence as Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christoudoulides (2011, 6-7) found in their study. Social media is perceived as a daunting endeavor by many companies.

Kärkkäinen, Jussila and Väisänen (2010, 8) concluded that B2B companies have limited understanding of the possibilities of social media and have problems evaluating the financial gains of social media activities. Michaelidou et al. (2011, 21) support these findings by stating that social media can be seen as irrelevant for a specific industry or companies are unsure if the use of social media really supports their brand. Staff unfamiliarity with social media and people's lack of training in using social media are also viewed as noticeable obstacles (Michaelidou et al., 2011, p. 21). Still it is considered by many as an opportunity that can't be ignored. As Toyota's former national marketing manager Doug Frisbie said in 2010: "The price of inactivity is greater than the risks of anything we'd be doing in social media" (Walter, 2010, p. 1). Companies need to become accustomed to the nature of social media and how to utilize it to their advantage. This paragraph introduces five different articles that have studied the building blocks of social media to better understand how companies can most efficiently exploit the ecosystems. With the help of these articles, companies should be able to lower their barriers of entry for social media channels.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have made significant contribution to social media sciences for a decade. The groundwork for their future studies was introduced in 2010 when they studied different social media channels, resulting in 10 advices for companies deciding to use social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 6-9).

| Advice | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Choose carefully | Choosing the channels that are suitable for the conveying the company message and used by the target audience. |
| Pick the application, or make your own | Examine the social media application space to find the suitable one for your company to join. If none are found, you can build your own, or do both. |
| Ensure activity alignment | When using multiple social media channels, company musts ensure that all activities are in line with each other. |
| Media plan integration | A company need to integrate social media and traditional media activities, as they appear the same for the audience |
| Access for all | A company should involve its staff to access and interact with the chosen social media channels. When engaging staff with company activities, it is also recommended to provide staff members with guidelines for interaction on social media. |

Table 1: How to use social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 7-8)

| Advice | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Be active | Company should take lead and be energetic in its social media activities by engaging in discussions and encouraging customer interaction. |
| Be interesting | Find out what your audience finds interesting, enjoyable and valuable, then vigorously posts that content. |
| Be humble | Take time to examine the channels you have chosen and the interactions that take place in them. Understanding the rules and history of the channels provides your company the competence to interact with users. |
| Be unprofessional | Instead of perfecting an overly-professional social media accounts, companies should try to blend in with other users and not be afraid of making mistakes. |
| Be honest | Companies need to respect the rules and traditions of social media channels. Trying to deceive users or hiding sensitive information that should be explicitly disclosed will be uncovered eventually. |

Table 2: How to be social (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010 p. 8-9)

The advices are split into two categories since the authors rightly feel that social media incorporates both a social aspect and media components (Tables 1,2). The advices are very general by nature, but offer a solid starting point for any company wanting to engage in social media. The recommendations on how to use social media represents crucial steps that a company must take, when adopting social media into its strategy. The main giveaway is to choose the social media that best suits the identity and objectives of the company and ensure that the company presence is aligned with the strengths of that particular social media. Is it also immensely important to integrate the relationship between traditional media and social media, since ultimately the customer see these both mediums as one singular entity, as the image a company represents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 6-7). How then to use the selected social media? As multiple studies after have suggested, being active, interesting and approachable are some of the most important means of engaging in social media (e.g. Kelleher & Miller, 2006, Sinha et al. 2011, Hanna et al, 2011, Van Noort & Willemsen, 2011 and Dijkmans et al. 2015). A company needs to keep in mind the audience it targets and figure out what sort on content is more likely to be interesting to them and actively push this content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 7-9). This however isn't enough as the company also needs to meet with the two-way interaction requirements of social media. Users need to be actively involved by commenting and giving them honest feedback, thus creating a platform that

enables customers and non-customers to easily engage with the company, thereby increasing the company reputation (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015, p. 9).

How to make an informed decision on what social media channel to choose? Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) have studied the different social media channels and especially the functionalities these channels introduce. First, the study presents a model for identifying different aspects of social media characteristics and then moves on to list four points on how then exploit those functionalities in order to effectively start engaging in social media.
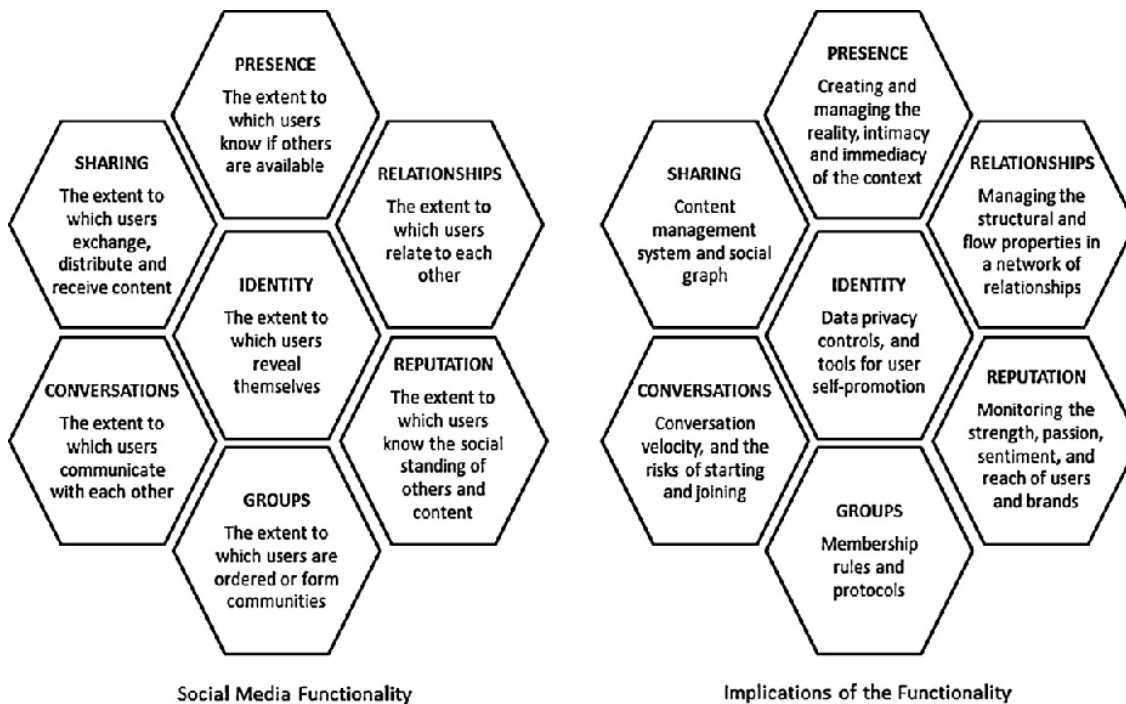


Figure 5: The honeycomb of social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 3).

In their research Kietzmann et al. (2011) have concluded that social media channels comprise out of seven functionality blocks (Figure 5). Presence, Sharing, Relationships, Identity, Conversations, Reputation, Groups are the dimensions that social media channels incorporate. The extent to which these dimensions are being used and how valuable they are for the functionality of the whole channel defines the how companies should engage in these channels. For example, according their research, Facebook grounds its functionality on Presence, Relationships, Identity, Conversations and Reputation. This means, that companies need to be aware that particularly these types of functionalities are highly used on Facebook and require active attention (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 3-8). The study also gives extra weight to the most important functionality of a social media channel. In the example given, then most important factor for Facebook is Relationships. Companies should then give emphasis to activities promoting and valuing relationships when engaging in Facebook.

Based on the honeycomb model of social media, Kietzmann et al. (2011) introduce their four-entry guideline for developing strategies for social media (Table 3).

| Guideline | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Cognize | Companies need to recognize and understand the social media channels they intend to engage in and the conversations being found. They also need to indentify influencers and monitor competitors or others accounts of particular interest. |
| Congruity | Companies have to form a strategy that homogenizes the functionalities of different social media channels and the company goals. Likewise, this strategy should integrate with traditional marketing strategy where one reinforces another. |
| Curate | Creating a strategy for when and how to engage on conversations is crucial for achieving a consistent output that is equivalent to the company objectives. This means that members in charge of social media interactions should have enough authority to solve customer issues or manage the situation thoroughly. |
| Chase | Important conversations, influencers or activities can be spread across many different social media channels. Finding the relevant information strengthens the company's capabilities to react and increases context awareness within that industry. |

Table 3: The four Cs guideline (Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 9-10)

In line with previous Kaplan and Haenlein's (2009, 7-9) study, recognizing the right social media channel that suit the company needs is important. Though the article naturally emphasizes the importance of identifying the needs of the own company, it recognizes the significance of looking the closest competitors as well, and how they perform at their own social media functions. Congruity is also often mentioned in the work of Kaplan and Haenlein (2009). Companies need to build their communication strategies in a way that takes both traditional and social media into account in their own right (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009, p. 7). The study also highlights the importance of exploiting the prime functionalities of different social media channels such as relationships in Facebook and sharing in YouTube. As the paper states; exploiting the different strengths of social media channels and cross promoting company status in each channel drives conversations, sharing, relationships and ultimately, brand value and awareness (Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 9).

Curate refers to how and when a company publishes. As stated earlier in the work of Michaelidou et al. (2011, 19), social media activities are seen as something unknown

and therefore intimidating. It is then important to have company policy regarding rules, appropriate behavior and intonation when using social media. As Armano (2009) states in his article, specific rules of engagement are necessary in order to provide a formalized company presence (Armano, 2009, p. 1). On the same note, Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9) suggest that companies should identify the employers with communication and social media talent. Because naturally talented members can be hard to find, DeVries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) have studied the effects of different posts and how users respond to them. The authors have examined the characteristics of different posts and found regularities that can help struggling companies in their early steps of social media activities. Vividness and lack of interactive activities encourage simple interactions like liking the post, while asking questions or otherwise forming an interactive posts result in increased comments (DeVries et al., 2012, p. 7). Placing links or other content that redirects the focus from liking or commenting the posts naturally decreases them, but companies should use these simple rules to their advantage, since engaging with users requires a company to cater to many different needs and interests. The final piece of curate advice is about the search for content and relevant information outside the company. As McCarthy, Lawrence, Wixted and Gordon (2010) put it in their research about environmental velocities (=change in rate and direction of a space in which the company exists), different sources and opinions can affect the present and future market positions, thus locating and processing as much information as possible increases the likelihood of successful decision making and responsiveness (McCarthy et al., 2010, p. 16). The last guideline for developing social media strategies refers to the chase for information. As Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain it is tremendously important to be aware of the social media activities concerning the company or field of interest. Companies that engage in social media listening can observe how social media channels are evolving, how competitors are operating, what opinions customers or potential customers have and also how to influence these people (Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 10).

Extending on the lessons of Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) and Kietzmann et al. (2011) additional information about the subject of forming social media presence has been examined by Hanna, Rohm and Crittenden (2011). In a study about understanding the different social media channels, the authors looked in to how the 50. Grammy awards were held and how social media was used to rejuvenate public's interest towards the music awards. The article introduces five lessons on how to integrate social media into marketing strategy (Hanna et al., 2011, p. 7-8, Table 4);

| Lesson | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Visualize the ecosystem | Envision and understand the three aspects of your content on social and traditional media, the owned, paid and earned. Understanding the division helps cross-promotion and content targeting for specific groups. |
| Identify and track key performance indicators | Traditional metrics such as reach or awareness are important, but only cover part of a larger entity. For example, engagement and user generated content are equally important. A company needs to determine the metrics most suited for their goals. |
| Begin with your story | A company needs to have a clear strategy on what is the message they wish to deliver and how is it done. |
| Social media does not require elaborate budgets | Operating on social media channels doesn't include considerable share of the budget. The potential reach is extensive and the users enjoy different types of media than they did before. |
| Be unique | Social media offers numerous approaches to attract users and engage them. Many channels are customizable and additional tools can be created only for your company. |

Table 4: Strategic integration of social media into a marketing communications strategy (Hanna et al., 2011, p. 7-8)

The first lesson implies that companies should be aware of the fact that social media incorporates three different kinds of media; Owned, paid and earned. This means that social media marketers need to be aware what are the companies' social media goals and how is the company planning to achieve those goals. What kind of media should the company create (i.e. owned) and how much of that content, if any, needs to be commercially inflated (i.e. paid) in order to reach desired number of followers. The success of social media presence and created content is then largely seen as fans, followers and user generated content (i.e. earned). It is important to take these three types of media into consideration when creating social media presence, since it helps marketers to understand the level of interaction between media platforms, while also giving insights whether one or more of these three aspects require additional attention (Hanna et al., 2011, p. 7-8). Lesson two is straightforward but crucial. Company needs to have defined expectations and the necessary metrics needed to evaluate social media performance. Without routine performance analysis, company cannot use social media to its full potential. Lessons three and five are more about how a company wants to be viewed in

social media. This strongly relates to the previous two articles about how to behave in social media and has everything to do with the strategy the company undertakes and also what is the reason for using social media in the first place. Is the company developing a new product or service and the aim in social media is to promote it, or is the company in need of a more grounded position among its customers. Crafting a unique story for a company is important in order to differentiate from the rest. Lesson number four emphasizes the flexible nature of social media and how with very little time and very low budget; great amount of reach and actions can be achieved. Even so, having a budget is mandatory to some extent, as Levine, Locke, Searle and Weinberger (2001, 87) emphasize that a blend of traditional marketing coupled with social media engagement yields the best results.

Viral marketing shares very similar characteristics with the concept word-of-mouth, but viral marketing always imbues the aspect of rapid expansion and effectiveness that word-of-mouth always doesn't. Additionally viral marketing refers to content released and shared on digital space as word-of-mouth might involve traditional and digital context. In order to successfully exploit the conditions of viral marketing (environment, message and messengers), the authors introduce five advices for successfully creating a viral marketing epidemic (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 4-5). Although the advices are intended for viral marketing, when comparing the guidelines of the article with the results of the three previous ones, we can see that very similar actions are required to reach a desired outcome. Therefore, albeit being briefly discussed on the previous paragraph, the studies conducted by Clarke & Flaherty (2005) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) offer additional insights for both viral marketing and typical social media interaction.

| Mechanism(s) | Source and Explanation | Mechanism(s) | Source and Explanation |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Entertainment, amusement, irritation | *Splash of Paint*: People are directed to the company's Internet site by entertaining, amusing, and/or irritating them. | • Coolness, fun<br>• Second-to-none offer | *Virgin Atlantic*: Customers pass on the message when they think it is cool or fun, or if the offer is second to none. |
| • Fun, quirk, amusement<br>• Specific and relevant to the person | *Claritas*: Viral marketing campaigns should be funny, quirky, or amusing, or something that is very specific and relevant to the individual customer. | • Violence, pornography, irreverent humor | *Clark McKay and Walpole Interactive*: The messages drawing highest response rates are those who have elements of violence, pornography, or irreverent humor. |
| • Fun, humor, excitement (jokes, games) | *Fabulous Bakin' Boys*: Its Web site supports the muffin products with flash animation sites, fun, jokes, as well as games that people can download and forward to their friends. | • Comic strips, video clips | Comic strips and video clips grab the attention of people who then forward the content to their friends (Harvard Management Update, 2000). |
| • Emotional elements | Internet strategies must have high levels of emotional content, including interactivity, the ability to involve other people, chat rooms, and the creation of online community (Barnes & Cumby, 2002). | • Contests and humor<br>• Important advice | Contests and humor are important elements in successful campaigns, which can also be successful if they have important advice to customers (Zimmerman, 2001). |
| • Nature of the industry<br>• Online tenure of the audience<br>• Topic | *Sage Marketing & Consulting Inc.*: The success of viral marketing is dependent on (1) the nature of the industry that the company is in; (2) the online tenure of the audience; and (3) the topic. People are more likely to pass on information about products like entertainment, music, Internet, and software. | • Controversy | A company gains publicity when the media writes about controversy on its Web sites, and competitors will have to deal with the company. But such word-of-mouth marketing can be dangerous because dissatisfied customers are more likely to share their negative experience than satisfied customers (Wilson & Abel, 2002). |
| • False, deliberately deceptive information<br>• Popularly believed narrative, typically false<br>• Anecdotal claims<br>• Junk | So-called "urban legends and folklore" can be organized as (1) false, deliberately deceptive information; (2) popularly believed narrative, typically false; (3) anecdotal claims, which may be true, false, or in between; (4) and junk. Such stories are frequently forwarded to friends, family, and colleagues (Urban Legends, 2002). | • Fun, intrigue, value<br>• Offer of financial incentives<br>• Need to create network externalities | People pass on messages if they find the product benefits to be fun, intriguing, or valuable for others; if they are given financial incentives for doing so; or if they feel a need to create network externalities (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2003). |

Table 5: Mechanisms behind viral marketing (Clarke & Flaherty, 2005, p. 126)

Clarke and Flaherty (2005) offers table of different mechanisms for invoking virality in content (Table 5). When looking at all mechanism, the table exhibits entertainment as a most used one in many examples, though relying on controversy or informative content are also valid ways to make a message potentially viral (Clarke & Flaherty, 2005, p. 126). In a B2B context the three companies *Claritas*, *Sage marketing & consulting Inc*. and *Clark McKay and Walpole Interactive* also use very different methods to draw us-

ers' attention. While *Claritas* relies on humor and quirkiness, *Clark McKay and Walpole* on the other hand creates controversial material that is not directly targeted to their main audience. *Sage Marketing and Consulting* and *Claritas* both employ methods that incorporate their target audience and industry to the content. When comparing the methods to the previous literature, engaging users by creating content interesting and relevant for them would likely be the more robust approach of drawing attention (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 7 and Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 9).
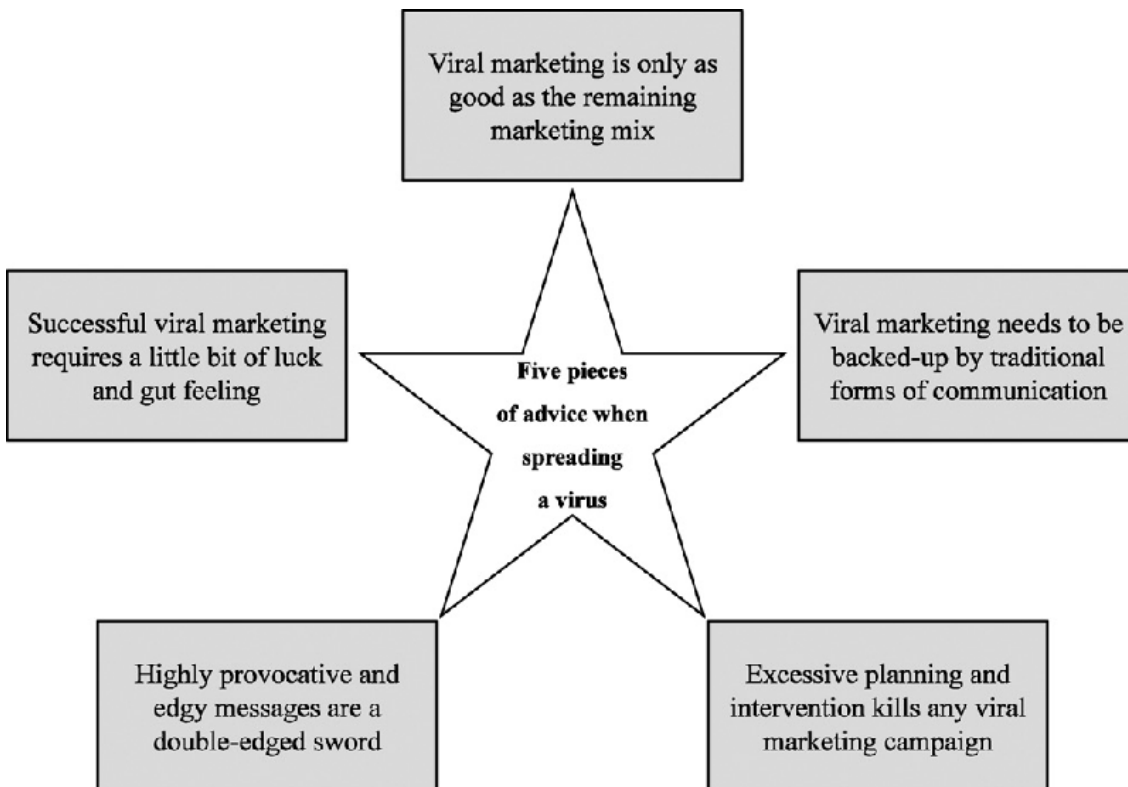


Figure 6: Five pieces of advice when spreading a virus (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 8).

As stated in the articles of Kaplan and Haenlein (2009, 7), Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9) and Hanna et al. (2011, 7-8), when trying to maximize the impact of social media engagement, aligning both old and new marketing methods is crucial. This holds true for viral marketing as well (Figure 6). When attempting to create a viral marketing phenomenon, it is deeply important to incorporate traditional media and ensure that the actual product or service is up to the task. Applying marketing channels in unison further promotes existing channels. Ultimately, when executed properly viral marketing can be tremendously effective at engaging customers. Backing viral marketing with traditional methods also affects people's views on a particular brand. Highly advertised brands as commonly seen as higher quality brands (Yoo, Donthu & Lee, 2000, p. 13-14 and p. Gil, Andrés & Salinas, 2007, p. 9-10).

Viral marketing is incredibly hard to control however, and no matter the initial results of a viral campaign the buzz is likely not going to convince the customer a second time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 8). It is also important to note that while companies are usually the ones that start the marketing campaign, they need know when to stop intervening. A truly successful campaign has to be able to endure on its own. Once the message has been sent, it is up to social media users to evaluate whether the content is good enough to be shared among friends. As the authors note and as practice has shown, highly provocative messages can help or completely destroy a marketing campaign. In 2014 an American pizza manufacturer DiGiorno that had previously been quite successful in social media activities, wanted to start a twitter campaign to further promote their business. Unfortunately not doing their background work resulted in a terrific backlash since the hashtag they chose was already being used by abuse victims. Even though the company was quick to react and pulled the post within 20 minutes, the harm was already done and people were furious (Stampler, 2014, p. 1).

## 2.4   Understanding social media users

Once a company has a good understanding about the social media channels available and some of the most effective ways to use them, it is time to focus on the users. Bernhoff (2010) from the Forrester research company has studied the different types of social media behavior and found in their research that online users could be divided into seven different categories. The ladder-form of categorizing social media users has the people who create at the top of the ladder to the people who consume, when coming down the ladder (Bernhoff, 2010, p. 4). As figure 7 shows the majority of social media users tend to only browse and read social media content, whilst roughly one third of users also create content. This same ladder technograpics was also used by Li (2010) in her book where she lays emphasis on the importance on realizing the different behavior types of users and how to integrate the activities on all the social media platforms to suit these different patterns (Li, 2010, p. 46).
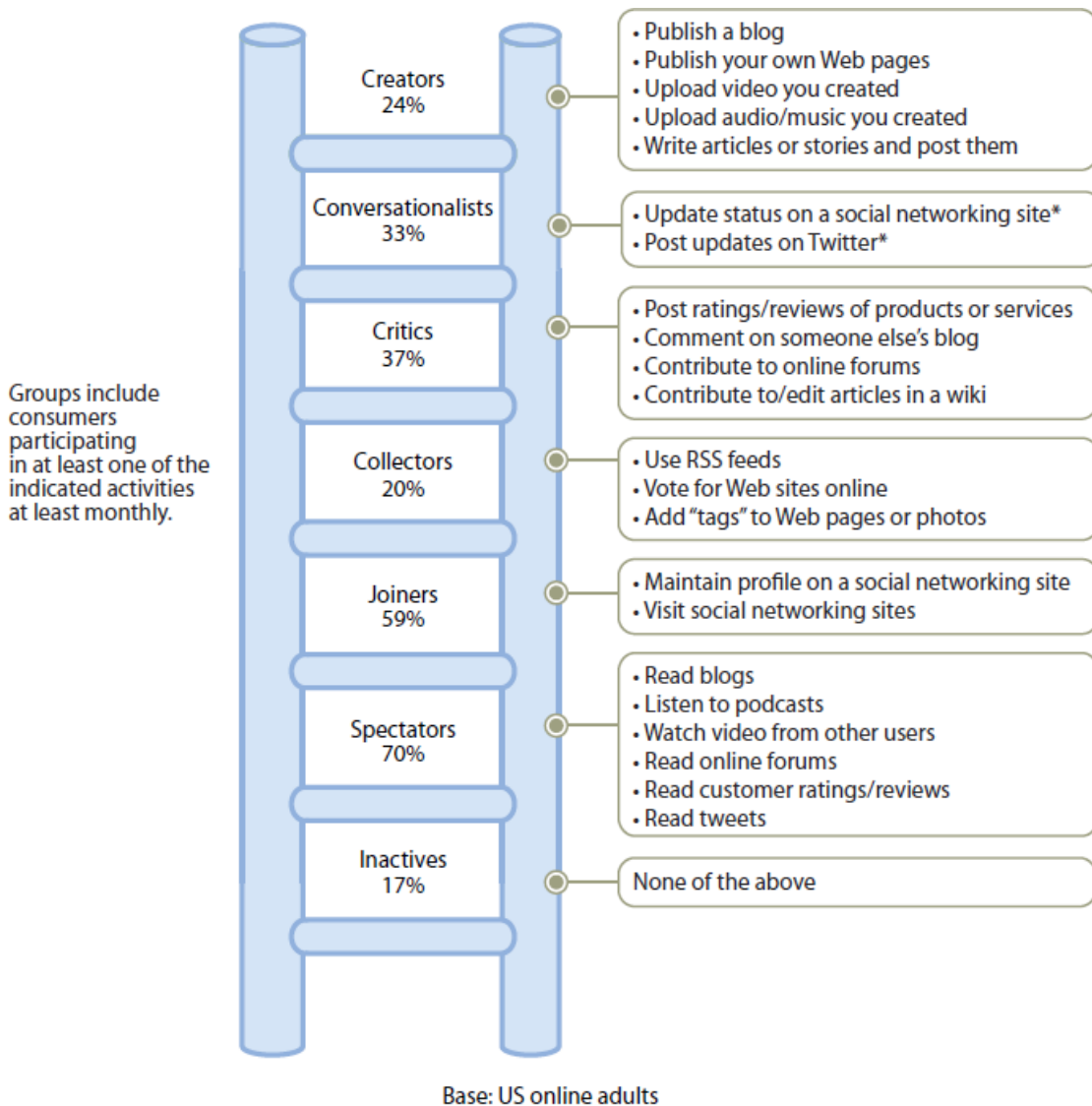
Figure 7: The social technograpics ladder (Bernhoff, 2010, p. 4)

In light of the seven categories, Li (2010) gives an example on how to utilize the knowledge this ladder-categorization brings. The task was to target a group called alpha-moms, identified as tech-savvy, parenting oriented mothers who enjoy above-average income. In order for marketing campaigns to reach this specific segment on social media, ladder-approach was applied in order to reveal what type of users engaged social media and in what extent. According to the research alpha moms were rather poor joiners and especially poor numbers in creators-category. On the other hand alpha moms seem to react to content more often than the average American citizen. Inspired by the results seen on figure 7, companies targeting alpha moms would do well to create possibilities for online reactions and criticism (Li, 2010, p. 48).

As discussed in the previous paragraphs, encouraging users to create content and interact with the company and with other users is something that every company should strive towards. Affecting the behavior of other people can be extremely difficult though as supporting a platform of open discussion and positive behavior while advocating company's business goals is a demanding pursuit to accomplish. Mangold and Faulds (2009, 6-9) provide companies with suggestions on how to provide an effective stage for customers to engage while also keeping the discussion within company's desired course (Table 6).

People tend to interact with people who share their interests and desires. Therefore it's beneficial for companies to utilize this behavior by providing social media users different platforms to engage in. These platforms could mean private Facebook groups or other similar social media groups, but also whole websites or blogs dedicated to a specific ensemble of people. These methods and activities engagage customers by giving them an easy and accessible way to give feedback and comment on a product or service makes them feel more engaged overall. Even if the feedback is negative by nature, it is important to react accordingly and show that as a company you can receive criticism. As practice has shown, many companies struggle with negative content published in their social media channels. One of the most outrageous ways to handle negative content is anger or denial. An American food company J.M. Smucker Company handled the discussion about genetically modified organisms (GMO) in their channel very poorly. Instead of actively taking part in the discussion or engaging at least in an orderly fashion the company instead chose the easy way and deleted all the posts criticizing the use of GMO. This naturally made people furious towards the company resulting in a serious dent in brand image (Alcala, 2014, p. 1). As Kaplan & Haenlein (2009) and Hanna et al. (2011) have stated previously, using different marketing tools to promote company business is a reliable method to increase marketing messages effectiveness. For example, Pepsi used an online customer loyalty program that gave customers a myriad of different prizes based on the customer's level of engagement. Warner Brothers on the other hand promoted the film *The dark knight* by creating an alternate reality gaming experience, where people could search the web and real life locations for previews and content about the upcoming (Radde, 2008, p. 1) film. The viral campaign was hugely successful, paving the way for future viral marketing campaigns. Mangold and Faulds (2009, 8) also highlight the importance of supplying information. When people feel that they know a lot about a company they are more likely to talk about them. Information is also one of the three main points in uses and gratifications theory for e-commerce as explained by Luo (2002). According to his study on the reasons why people engage in online activity informativeness is a key factor (Luo, 2002, p. 6-7).

| Methods | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Provide Networking platforms | Users like to associate with people of similar interest and desires. Companies should encourage and actively provide way to support this. |
| Use blogs and other social media tools to engage customers | Ability to react and comment increases engagement and commitment. Different applications and possibilities within social media channels can be used with great success. |
| Use both traditional and Internet-based promotional tools to engage customers | Online interactions should be supported with traditional promotional means. Traditional marketing is still an effective way to influence customer behavior, particularly when combining both promotional methods. |
| Provide information | Knowledge of the subject and access to information allows users to discuss about the company and its products or services. |
| Be outrageous | Outrageous marketing methods are a certain way to induce interaction centering the company. |
| Provide exclusivity | Excluding some people from the rests by providing them information, offerings or other content gives them a feel of being special. Commitment and engagement can be achieved by providing exclusivity. |
| Design products with talking points and consumers' desired self images in mind | Visual and functional differentiation of a specific product from other similar products can draw attention to the company. Companies should investigate on how to differentiate themselves from rest of the industry as well as how their company values are presented in the product. |
| Support causes that are important to consumers | Companies should leverage on the values and emotional connections customers have. By supporting a cause important for the customers within the industry, a company can differentiate themselves while improving brand image. |
| Utilize the power of stories | Memorable stories invoke interactions. Companies should utilize story-telling in their promotional efforts since capturing tales are often repeated on social media. |

Table 6: How to influence and shape discussions on social media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 6-9)

While information is valuable for many customers, extravagant behavior is another way to appeal to users. As Mangold and Faulds (2009, 8) state, "people talk about things they find to be somewhat outrageous". A famous example of this strategy done right is by Burger King, who in 2009 introduced a new marketing campaign that encouraged users to de-friend 10 of their existing friends for a free whopper-burger. In the end nearly 234 000 people were de-friended by the end of the campaign, totaling in a respectful 23 000 free burgers being gifted (Wortham, 2009, p. 1). Users can additionally be attracted by differentiating different customers. Not just providing an exclusive platform for users to engage in, creating special content, offerings or information for a group of consumers is highly beneficial for the company. Creating special conditions for a particular set of users makes them feel appreciated and gives something for the other users to strive for. Product samples, subscription newsletters or a chance to order before others are valid ways to provide exclusivity. Mangold and Faulds (2009, 8-9) also discuss how products and services should be designed to be different when comparing them to e.g. competitive products. This view is also share by Dobele, Toleman and Beverland (2005) as they explain that engaging messages get passed on when the message captures some of the following traits; Be fun or intriguing, are attached to a product that is easy to use or highly visible, are well targeted, associated with a credible source and combine technologies (Dobele et al. 2005, p. 4). Thus, products and services should be designed with customer interest in mind. It is also important to remember that simpler things are easier to remember and communicate. As stated by previous researches (He, Zha & Li, 2013, p, 6 and Dijkmans, et al. 2015, p. 8) people tend to share ideas and opinions they feel emotionally connected with. Companies should then embrace one or some of the causes that the customer base feels strongly about. A good example of this is the ice cream manufacturer Ben and Jerry. They have for a long time now invested on environmental and healthcare programs that they, and their customers, feel strongly for. Another way to draw attention and promote interaction is using stories. Somewhat similarly to drawing emotional response from supporting a worthy cause, stories can evoke memories or mental pictures that can create strong engagement towards a company. Whether conveying interesting, controversial, funny or emotional messages, stories can have significant influence on users and social media channels are an effective way to distribute them.

## 2.5     What is social media listening

Social media channels have a tendency to slightly alter the ways they operate, adding and removing certain features or making tiny algorithm changes that force users and businesses to interpret the channels in a different way. Because of this variation within

social media channels, social media listening hasn't got the attention it would deserve in the academic field. The reason in entirely understandable, since it is considerably challenging to study something that can change functions within the time of study (Zhang & Vos, 2014, p. 12). Because of these limitations this section mostly comprises material taken from social media sites that promote best practices or from sites that offer social media listening tools for companies.

Hootsuite, a social media monitoring tools offering company defines social media listening as a "process of finding and assessing what is being said about a company, topic, brand, or person on social media channels" (Fontein, 2016, p.1). In their book about social media marketing, Evans and McKee (2010) state that listening is the primary method of understanding what to do and why on social media. The book further emphasizes the importance of social media listening, presenting it as a clear way for companies to announce to the customers, employees and stakeholders that companies are genuinely interested in ideas and opinions of other companies, meanwhile raising the relevance of their own ideas and opinion (Evans & McKee, 2010, p. 272-273). Hill (2015, 2) goes as far as saying that social media listening is a delicate art where companies balance between listening and connecting with people. Several different industry outlets define a score of different benefits that social media listening introduce. A combination of stated benefits includes the following (Fontein, 2016, p.1, Summers, 2015, p. 1 and Byrne, 2014, p. 1);

- Improved customer care
- Get feedback
- Generate leads (fix current issues and correct problems in a product)
- Find influencers and brand advocates
- Find talented people (for recruiting purposes)
- Analyze competition
- Attract new customers (by joining conversations)
- Discover community habits and preferred sites
- Drive innovation (What customers want)
- Identify relevant topics to write about
- Identify headlines with 'viral' potential

Zhang and Vos (2014) present these points in a more abstract way, categorizing the benefits of social media listening in four groups as figure 8 shows. Through the act of listening social media conversations and interacting with them, companies can influence notable groups or individuals, thus raising their own brand value and awareness. Crawford (2009) sees the value of social media listening in three dimensions. Companies are seen participating and hearing the opinions of online users, while also being able to lower the cost of customer support expenses. A company also gains insights about brand discussion and consumer opinions (Crawford, 2009, p. 8-9).

Figure 8: Aim of monitoring or tracking activities (Zhang & Vos, 2014, p. 7).

How to achieve the aforementioned goals? The scope of social media is enormous and even though the most used social media channels offer some analytics, the role and behavior of other than you is something not easily accessed by content holder. Social media intelligence company Sproutsocial offers some alarming statistics on how on Twitter, 30% of the tweets mentioning a specific company don't include the Twitter handle. The stats go on describing that only 9% of Tweets directly refer to a brand, thus the majority of users discuss about the company or product rather than with the company (Beese, 2015, p. 1). Analytics company Smartinsights (2014) view social media listening as a process of six different procedures. In their definition as seen in figure 9, a company uses different keywords to look for conversations, identify the influencers and segmenting the audience in order to uncover the attitudes and opinions within that space. Continuing this process through in an iterative manner further strengthens the companies understanding of the social media output toward the industry they practice in (Smartinsights, 2014, p. 1-2).

Figure 9: The process of social media listening (Smartinsights, 2014, p.1).

Zhang and Vos (2014) summarize their conclusions about monitoring methods the following way, as seen in figure 10. Keyword search and attitude analysis are key methods in both views, but the authors also present some other methods that slightly differ from the framework introduced by Smartinsights. Analyzing the spread patterns means finding the causal relations of a specific discussion or event and following the effects of different interventions made in the discussion or event. This enables companies to predict possible outcomes of interventions and possibly shape the discussion in the direction they prefer. Combination of methods refers to the possibility of purchasing social media listening tools. Social media listening is a time consuming enterprise and some companies may feel that social media presence is best handled with professionals. Fortunately for starting companies, there is an extensive amount of free and paid services that provide parts or fully serviced listening platforms for companies to use (Hipperson, 2010, p.1-2).
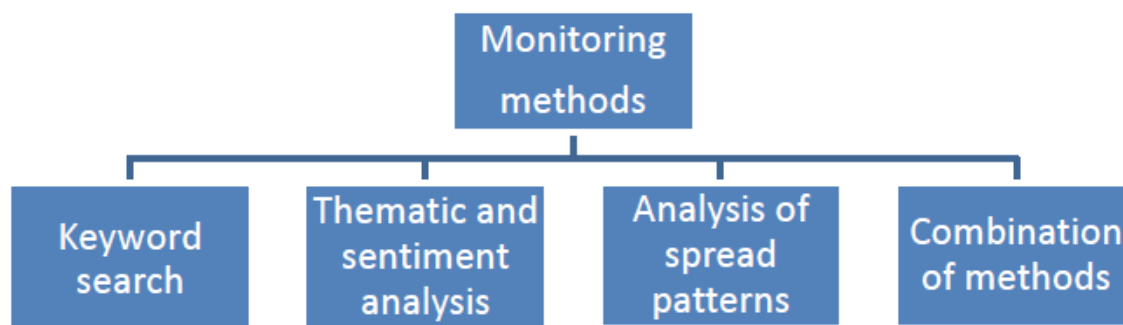
Figure 10: Monitoring methods for tracking activities (Zhang & Vos, 2014, p. 11).

Companies offering social media listening tools list some of the things companies should pay attention to when searching for relevant information on social media. According to Fontein (2016, 3-5), Beese (2015, 4-6) and Summers (2015, 2-5) Some of the tangible points to look for are:

- Brand name
- Competitors
- Industry buzzwords
- Brand slogans
- Names of the company representatives
- Campaign names or keywords
- Hashtags and industry-specific phrases
- Keywords people might use when researching a product
- Industry opinion leaders and influencers and the channels they use

The list comprises out of examples that a company would likely want to use, but choosing the solution ultimately depends on the company objectives, listening budget and resources regarding to staff knowledge and know-how (Rappaport, 2010, p. 198). The list however forms a solid starting point for any company to begin their social media listening. In addition to aforementioned search topics Templeman (2017) from Forbes magazine also encourages companies to create an engagement strategy. Once a company finds favorable discussions to participate in, a framework for engagement will keep the tone and level of professionalism in line with the company's requirements. A well documented strategy yields a proper response to almost any type of comment found on social media in the long run. This is why evaluation and adjustment of the engagement strategy is important as the company gains experience in social media discussions (Templeman, 2017, p. 3). The same evaluation and adjustment necessity applies also to others parts of social media listening methods. Social media is an ever-changing environment, monitoring methods also need to improve and change with it (Zhang & Vos, 2014, p. 10).

# 3 RESEARCH METHODOLGY

## 3.1 Design science research in information systems

The aim of this study is to create a social media marketing plan for UWIS. The plan incorporates three separate aspects, Actions, Strategy and Instructions; each focusing on different areas of improving social media presence (Figure 11). Actions include practical guidelines and structure for UWIS to understand and analyze their social media landscape more thoroughly. Social media listening provides UWIS with a list of keywords, influencers and social media accounts related to diving industry that UWIS should follow. Timeframe and Goals & benchmarks include the objectives UWIS attempts to achieve with social media presence and a detailed plan of how these objectives are going to be reached on a monthly schedule. The last part, Analysis, encompasses the different values and metrics that UWIS should measure and examine in order to improve their online presence and achieve the set objectives. The second aspect, Strategy, comprises out of three stepped approach on how UWIS engages and effectively interacts on social media. Primary strategy dictates the main goals and the message UWIS aspires to convey to their customers. These requirements influence the individual strategy of the selected channels, each channel having a distinct purpose on achieving the goals set in the primary strategy. Furthermore, with every channel having slightly different set of objectives, the activities and content of each channels has to be designed in a way that supports these objectives. Thus, designing a separate content strategy for each channels aims to help UWIS to differentiate their channels for more effective engagement.



Figure 11: Social media marketing plan for UWIS

The marketing plan consists of several different smaller segments that need to integrate well together. Because of the fragmented nature of the plan and study being grounded on practical use, an iterative approach for designing the marketing plan was

chosen. Therefore, the research is based on Hevner, March, Park and Ram (2004) study on design science in information systems research. In their work, the authors discuss how behavioral science and design science, two different paradigms should both be used in a complementary way in order to efficiently conduct information systems research. Behavioral science tries to explain or predict organizational or human behavior when information systems are involved. This paradigm is more focused on explaining a situation or reasons behind a certain event, whereas design science is heavily focused on problem solving. The objective in design science is to create innovations that incorporate the effective design, implementation and use of information systems (Hevner et al. 2004, p. 2). In order to better understand the complex nature of information systems, researchers have tried to break the entirety to smaller more comprehensible pieces. IT artifacts are concrete descriptions of that allow researchers to indentify and process the problem and thus understand and focus on solving it. According to Hevner et al. (2004) IT constructs are defined as constructs (vocabulary and symbols), models (abstractions and representations), methods (algorithms and practices) and instantiations (implemented and prototyped systems) (Hevner et al., 2004, p. 3). When combining influences from behavioral science and design science into a unified framework, information system researchers and practitioners can design, assess and introduce more consistent research and improved information systems. The method of segmenting a larger entity would appear to be a very suitable way of creating a marketing plan. As the design science approach encourages examining a problems and ultimately reaching the goal from multiple perspectives, the choice of using the model provided by Hevner et al. (2004) seems natural. Because this study is eventually being used as a marketing plan in practice, the use of grounded methods in forming of the segments as well as iterative approach on improving the final product would seem highly beneficial.

| Guideline | Description |
|---|---|
| Guideline 1: Design as an Artifact | Design-science research must produce a viable artifact in the form of a construct, a model, a method, or an instantiation. |
| Guideline 2: Problem Relevance | The objective of design-science research is to develop technology-based solutions to important and relevant business problems. |
| Guideline 3: Design Evaluation | The utility, quality, and efficacy of a design artifact must be rigorously demonstrated via well-executed evaluation methods. |
| Guideline 4: Research Contributions | Effective design-science research must provide clear and verifiable contributions in the areas of the design artifact, design foundations, and/or design methodologies. |
| Guideline 5: Research Rigor | Design-science research relies upon the application of rigorous methods in both the construction and evaluation of the design artifact. |
| Guideline 6: Design as a Search Process | The search for an effective artifact requires utilizing available means to reach desired ends while satisfying laws in the problem environment. |
| Guideline 7: Communication of Research | Design-science research must be presented effectively both to technology-oriented as well as management-oriented audiences. |

Figure 12: Design-science research guidelines (Hevner et al., p. 9).

As Hevner et al. (2004, 6) state, information systems research is affected by multiple different stakeholders and predicting all the possible implications of the plan is difficult. The framework presented by Hevner et al. (2004, 9) approaches this situation by emphasizing the creation and evaluation of the IT artifact form different perspectives. By following the guidelines of design science shown in figure 12, the research approaches the problem of creating a social media marketing plan from various aspects. The artifact, the social media marketing plan is designed to provide sufficient knowledge for the company to have a good sense of which channels to use, what kind of content should be shared on social media, how social media influencers and important user generated content can be found and what services UWIS can utilize in this affair. In context of the framework, UWIS's problem lies in the limited resources they is able to allocate to marketing purposes. Because of the finite resources, social media is seen as a viable option to cost effectively raise product awareness and drive sales. As of this moment though, the activity on social media channels is insufficient and the actual knowledge of how to properly engage in social media and promote the product is inadequate.

The third guideline involves evaluating the created artifact. The key aspect of the social media action plan is also the framework about how to measure and analyze social media presence. The monitoring framework is constructed using two sources as a base for analysis. The first source is by Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni and Pauwels (2013). The authors have studied numerous other studies on social media management and have

collected the findings on to one paper. This article is of outmost importance because of the soft metrics it provides, like user motivation to visit sites and how social media user base, should also be monitored. These insights can give UWIS a better understanding about the culture and behavior of the follower base. The second article addresses the more hard metrics that a company needs to monitor. The authors Hoffman and Fodor (2010) introduce relevant metrics like the amount of followers of fans and impressions-to-interactions –ratio. These numbers are also crucial in order to fully understand what content resonates with the audience and how social media presence should be developed. The combination of these two sources gives valid means of evaluating the effectiveness of social media action plan. The proposed interval of analysis is one month in order to gain sufficient data but also to be adaptable enough to quickly react to undesirable outcomes.

In guideline four, the design science guideline emphasizes contribution. This research aims to build a purposeful social media strategy for UWIS, but that strategy can be utilized to some extent by every business, though companies that produce concrete products within the diving industry and have focus on business-to-business are likely to benefit more from this work. The background material of this study discusses the benefits and practicalities of social media to the extent of being reasonably helpful for every business engaging in social media. In broader insights presented in the background research offer extensive knowledge of the research on social media marketing, thus giving any reader a detailed overview on the advantages of building a social media presence. Guideline five accentuates the importance of strict and exact methods when building and evaluating the created artifact. In this research, rigor is applied by studying social media engagement from multiple different angles. This study focuses on best practices presented in academic and non-academic literature while also gathering supportive data from interviews and other active social media accounts within diving industry that are effectively using social media to promote their business. The gathered examples and interview responses are compared to literature and this process is iterated for improved results. Literature is also used to form a basis for performance evaluation of the artifact. Identifying key components to monitor is a crucial step to receive accurate data. Social media channels also offer ample opportunities to compare own performance to those channels that are notably effective.

The sixth guideline can be divided in to three parts. The first component, *means*, involves identifying the required actions and the resources available to reach the desired solution. *Ends*, the second component in design as a search process serve as the goals and the possible constraints the solution may hold. The final component, *laws*, are the powers in the environment that are beyond the researcher's control. In this research, means include identifying the most effective channels for business-to-business marketing in the diving industry, finding ways to locate and create beneficial social media con-

tent and analyze the material that could help when constructing the solution. Ends include creating and effective social media presence for UWIS with the focus on business-to-business marketing and raising product awareness. Working solely on diving industry and focusing on business-to-business relationship is the most obvious constraint that this research contains. The fact that UWIS also doesn't wish to reserve a substantial budget to market the product steers the focus to more economical direction so having a small budget won't be an issue in the final draft of the plan. The seventh and last guideline encompasses one of the key aspects of any research, the communication. One of the most important aspects of any writing is its ability to convey the intended purpose in an understandable and repeatable way. As such, this study also structures its steps in a way that enables readers to perform the same actions and include phases that this research may have missed.

By using the framework and guidelines as a base for research, this study is using qualitative methods to discover all the necessary aspects involving the construction of a social media marketing plan. The approach is divided in to three parts (shown in figure 13), first step being the deconstruction of the social media marketing plan. This division accentuates the different aspects that need to be examined in order to reach an effective marketing plan. This means looking what channels and platforms available for UWIS to utilize, who are their primary customers and how do these customers engage on social media, what are the primary objectives and requirements that UWIS has and how UWIS should present itself on social media and how can that presence be improved over time. After identifying the problems that need to be solved this study examines the possible solutions. To achieve this, the study gathers data from mainly social media marketing literature, case study literature on successful uses of social media, interviews with diving organizations and taking influence from accounts that are successful in their social media presence when compared to others in the diving industry. The gathered information from interviews and empirical examination of successful diving organizations on social media is then compared to literature. Reviewed and relevant information is then used to form the final marketing plan. With literature on social media marketing forming the structure and basis of the plan, interviews and benchmarks identified from other organizations using social media channels are used to further define and focus the marketing efforts. This means that the form, subject and visuals of the content are appealing to the target audience and that UWIS is operating on the most advantageous channels.
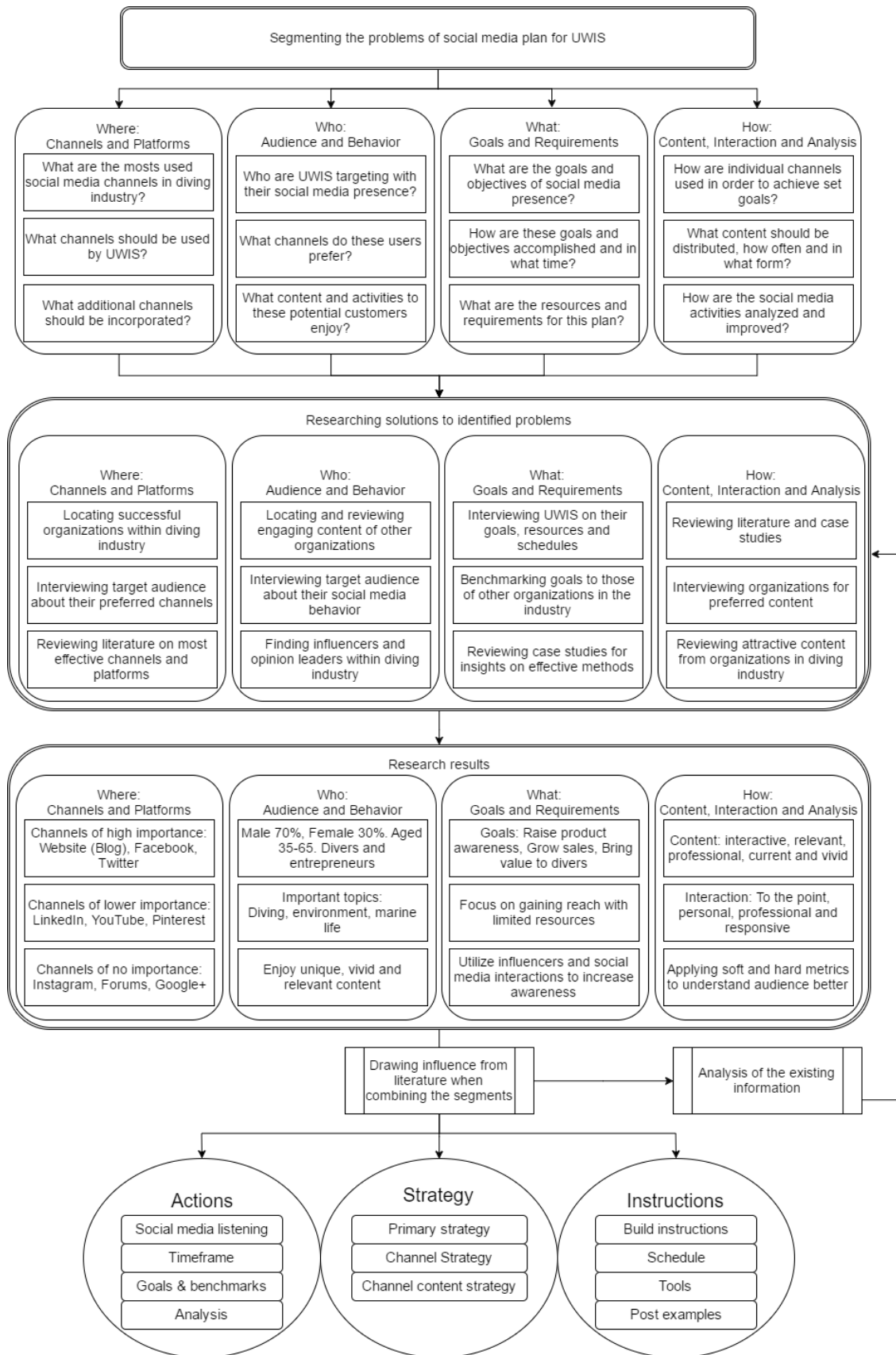
Figure 13: Formation of the social media marketing plan

## 3.2 Evaluating social media performance

As stated in the research literature (e.g. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009, p. 4-7, Kietzmann et al. p. 1-3, Hanna et al. 2011, p. 2), reasons for companies to use social media include directing traffic to their website, building relationships with customers and creating communities, locating new business opportunities and collecting feedback, publish information and other content, thus largely backing their brand. In order to have any notion on how the desired objectives are working, some sort of strategy for analysis must be in place. Some critical social media metrics like amount of followers or fans and the amount of actions done by users are among traditional metrics that companies should follow. The problem with evaluating social media performance has been two-folded, what metrics are more important than others and how do you measure the return on your social media investments. Michaelidou et al (2011, 7) share this view in their research, as they state, how very little is known about the metrics used by business-to-business organizations in their effort to assess the social media effectiveness. Because the data received from social media sources is quantitative and qualitative, traditional metrics that have been used are unable to measure the true impact of social media. As McCann and Barlow (2015, 5) state in their research, metrics such as amount of followers do not necessarily relate to increased sales, company presence across social media can ultimately lead to financial gain. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) encourage marketers to turn the traditional way of calculating the marketing investments in terms of customer response upside down. By emphasizing customer motivation to use social media over own marketing investments, companies can focus on measuring the customer engagement level and through these calculations do the necessary investments (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010, p. 4). The reason behind this attitude lies in the understanding that web 2.0, i.e. user generated content is in control of social media engagement and the company can only lightly affect the course of conversations (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010, Hanna et al., 2011, Peters et al., 2013, McCann & Barlow, 2015).

| Goals | Objectives | Metrics |
|---|---|---|
| Deepen relationship with customers | • Achieve a critical mass of audience through social media | • # of advocates (Fans, Followers, authors)<br>• # of comments posted |
| | • Encourage ongoing interaction with the brand | • Comments/ advocate<br>• Advocate influence profile |
| Learn from the community | • Uncover common themes among interactions | • Rank of topics discussed<br>• Decipher positive vs. negative sentiment |
| Drive purchase intent | • Persuade engagement with Web site content and utility | • Leads to ecommerce partners<br>• Retail locater results activity<br>• Product brochure downloads |

Table 7: Social media metrics framework. (Murdough, 2009, p. 2)

As mentioned above, the literature offers plenty of concrete examples what to measure on social media. Murdough (2009) offers a simplistic view on how to measure the desired goals of social media engagement (Table 7). The key focus points according to his study are reach, the valence of discussion and the outcomes that happened afterwards. Whether a company is focusing on deepening the customer relationship or learning from the community, keeping these three key aspects in mind is very important in order to successfully measure social media effectiveness. Hoffman and Fodor (2010) show similar metrics in their research, but offer a different structure to focus on. The authors divide their metrics to three different categories depending on the focus the company tries to achieve (Table 8). Straight comparison between the two models is hard, since they both offer distinctly different points of view for measuring social media success, even though the metrics are similar. Hoffman and Fodor's structure could be interpreted as slightly more abstract, since it only offers indirect guidelines for the three presented goals.

| SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATION | BRAND AWARENESS | BRAND ENGAGEMENT | WORD OF MOUTH |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Blogs** | • number of unique visits<br>• number of return visits<br>• number of times bookmarked<br>• search ranking | • number of members<br>• number of RSS feed subscribers<br>• number of comments<br>• amount of user-generated content<br>• average length of time on site<br>• number of responses to polls, contests, surveys | • number of references to blog in other media (online/offline)<br>• number of reblogs<br>• number of times badge displayed on other sites<br>• number of "likes" |
| **Microblogging**<br>(e.g., Twitter) | • number of tweets about the brand<br>• valence of tweets +/–<br>• number of followers | • number of followers<br>• number of @replies | • number of retweets |
| **Cocreation**<br>(e.g., NIKEiD) | • number of visits | • number of creation attempts | • number of references to project in other media (online/offline) |
| **Social Bookmarking**<br>(e.g., StumbleUpon) | • number of tags | • number of followers | • number of additional taggers |
| **Forums and Discussion Boards**<br>(e.g., Google Groups) | • number of page views<br>• number of visits<br>• valence of posted content +/- | • number of relevant topics/threads<br>• number of individual replies<br>• number of sign-ups | • incoming links<br>• citations in other sites<br>• tagging in social bookmarking<br>• offline references to the forum or its members<br>• in private communities: number of pieces of content (photos, discussions, videos); chatter pointing to the community outside of its gates<br>• number of "likes" |
| **Product Reviews**<br>(e.g., Amazon) | • number of reviews posted<br>• valence of reviews<br>• number and valence of other users' responses to reviews (+/–)<br>• number of wish list adds<br>• number of times product included in users' lists (i.e., Listmania! on Amazon.com) | • length of reviews<br>• relevance of reviews<br>• valence of other users' ratings of reviews (i.e., how many found particular review helpful)<br>• number of wish list adds<br>• overall number of reviewer rating scores entered<br>• average reviewer rating score | • number of reviews posted<br>• valence of reviews<br>• number and valence of other users' responses to reviews (+/–)<br>• number of references to reviews in other sites<br>• number of visits to review site page<br>• number of times product included in users' lists (i.e., Listmania! on Amazon.com) |
| **Social Networks**<br>(e.g., Bebo, Facebook, LinkedIn) | • number of members/fans<br>• number of installs of applications<br>• number of impressions<br>• number of bookmarks<br>• number of reviews/ratings and valence +/– | • number of comments<br>• number of active users<br>• number of "likes" on friends' feeds<br>• number of user-generated items (photos, threads, replies)<br>• usage metrics of applications/widgets<br>• impressions-to-interactions ratio<br>• rate of activity (how often members personalize profiles, bios, links, etc.) | • frequency of appearances in timeline of friends<br>• number of posts on wall<br>• number of reposts/shares<br>• number of responses to friend referral invites |
| **Video and Photosharing**<br>(e.g., Flickr, YouTube) | • number of views of video/photo<br>• valence of video/photo ratings +/– | • number of replies<br>• number of page views<br>• number of comments<br>• number of subscribers | • number of embeddings<br>• number of incoming links<br>• number of references in mock-ups or derived work<br>• number of times republished in other social media and offline<br>• number of "likes" |

Table 8: Key social media objectives and metrics. (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010, p. 6)

As Michaelidou et al. (2011) assess in their study, metrics and framework like these are difficult for big and especially for smaller companies to utilize. The qualitative and quantitative data received from social media channels are extremely hard to comprise into meaningful data (Michaelidou et al., 2011, p. 13). Peters et al. (2013, 6-8) studied numerous different sources of social media metrics- research and comprised their own interpretation of the prevalent opinions. While the study further blur the clarity of analysis on social media effectiveness, the authors introduce some interesting and noteworthy ideas to look for when assessing social media performance. The research categorizes social media environment in four components; Motives, content, network structure and social roles and interactions (Figure 14).
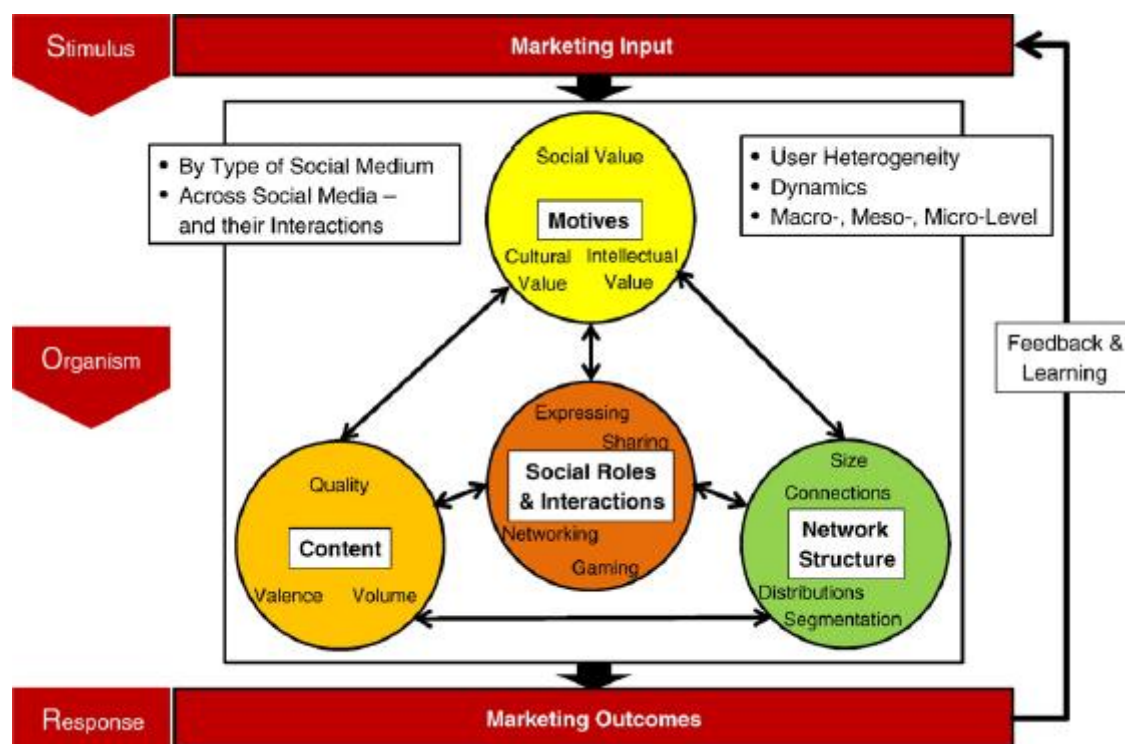
Figure 14: Framework for social media metrics. (Peters, et al., 2013, p. 2)

The content-component holds very much the same metrics as Hoffman's and Fodor's research shown above, but the other three components introduce new concepts to investigate. Seraj (2012, 5-9) introduces a motivation-concept that is divided to three segments that explain the reasons for users to engage in a particular social channel. If the user is motivated through intellectual value for example, he or she engages a channel because of the co-created content by professionals and enthusiasts and perceived quality of said content. The other two components, social and cultural value occupy a rather similar space in terms of motivation, but are different enough to be separated. Social value is the motivation for people to connect with each other. This value is important for companies since it's the most important aspect of tie-building within a community, thus finding a way to increase social value increases loyalty among the recipients. When looking further into ties within social media channels, we see that the increase of social value becomes cultural value. As Dholakia, Bagozzi and Pearo (2004, 21) state in their research, in the midst of co-creation and interactions, cultural norms are created and intentions become community oriented. These bonds make up for the strongest ties and eventually visiting a site may become a ritual for the user (Seraj, 2012, p. 7-9).

Network structure emphasizes the size and attributes that make up the community. What companies should take from this component involves in the distributions of content and the valence and tone on said content. If the community has strong mutual ideology or the clustering coefficient is high, then content valence can be focused on creating a more informal and group ideology-centered content. This way, the user may relate

to the company in a more positive way. Having "inside jokes" could be disastrous however, when tie strengths are weak and the community consists of multiple different clusters of people with low cultural congruity. Social roles and interactions relate to network structure to some extent, but focus more on the individual interactions between different users. As the Peters et al. (2013, 8) explain, "A social role is continuously mediated between actors in a social network, especially by observing and copying behavior of others". This means that users tend to conform themselves into certain roles that they feel comfortable with, meaning that companies should be on the look for individuals that tend to take the role of an advocate or an influencer and consider leveraging from the situation.

Analyzing social media performance is a challenging obstacle to face, but it is not entirely impossible to achieve. The metrics are established and there are multiple automated ways to analyze them. The problem lies with the soft data and measures that can't be directly quantified. As McCann's and Barlow's (2015, 11-12) study uncovered, even the companies that do measure their efforts on social media have a hard time figuring out what metrics exactly should they focus on and how it all relates to successful use of social media when compared to the purpose of using social media. This research uses the hard metrics presented by Murdough (2009, 2) and Hoffman and Fodor (2010, 6) to give UWIS a good starting point on what metrics are viable and should be monitored. From Peters et al. (2013) study this research adopts its soft metrics, like motivation for users to visit a social media channel and the look on network structure and social roles. By examining these hard and soft metrics, UWIS has a foundation for analyzing the content users and they themselves create and how their community is forming. It is important to keep in mind, that social media analysis framework presented in this research is nowhere near a definitive solution to social media effectiveness analysis. As all the sources used in this chapter declare, monitoring should focus on the goals and objectives the company is striving for and the emphasis on different metrics will likely vary from situation to situation. McCann and Barlow (2015, 13-14) also accentuate that every framework presents the similar metrics in different structures, meaning that company's own intentions should be the driving force behind the decision on what metrics to highlight.
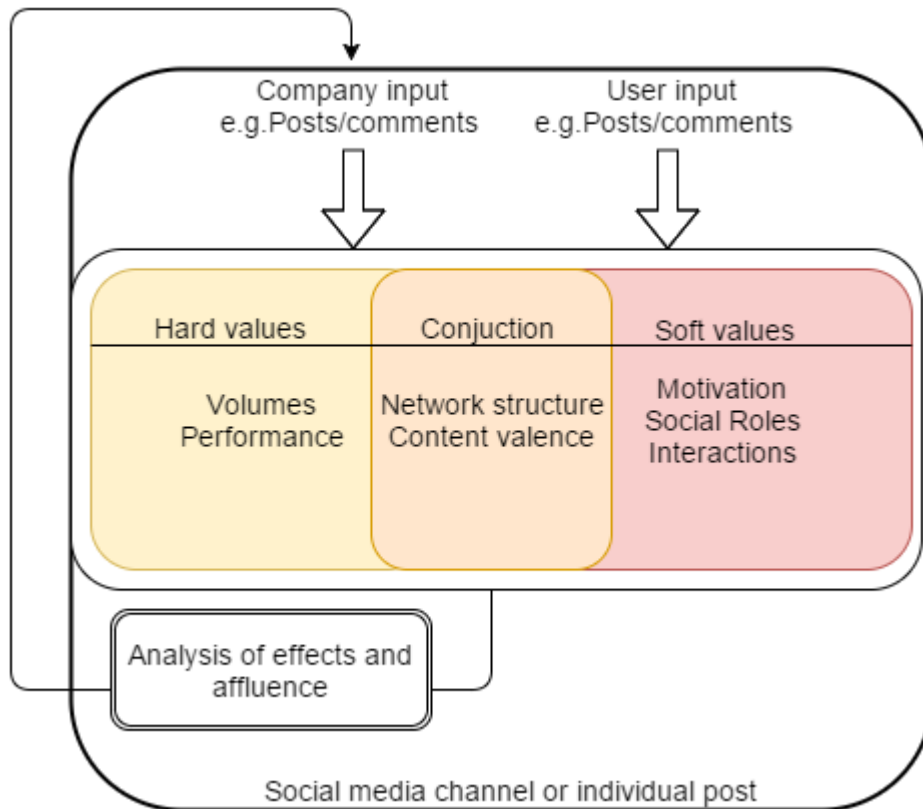
Figure 15: Analysis of social media activities and their effectiveness

In the light of the aforementioned studies, this research presents the following framework for assessing social media effectiveness (Figure 15). The figure shows how the two sides of valuable metrics work in relation. When moving from hard values towards softer metrics, the difficulty of reasonably measuring the values increases. Both the company input and user input can be assessed with the same values, though UWIS needs to keep mind what metrics are particularly important and concentrate on them. A more detailed description of the metrics is presented below (Tables 9-12). The framework is divided in two larger segments, which are further divided in two. The reason for the first division is to encourage UWIS to analyze their social media behavior by looking at individual posts and the performance of the whole channel. By monitoring the possible actions produced by single post, UWIS can see what type of content, format and visual look is engaging for their audience. Then again, looking at the performance of the channel in general gives UWIS an important overview on how their efforts are unfolding. The second division is between soft and hard values. In the framework, soft values are the ones that can't be measured through numbers in a traditional way. Values like user motivation or relations between users must be evaluated by the company itself. Values like tie strength and clustering coefficient can be calculated mathematically, but the data is hard to get and only some commercial services offer this type on information. Hard values on the other hand rely on the data most channels monitor them-

selves and an ample amount of third party services also provide. Volumes, impressions and reach are examples of information that are critical for the assessment of social media performance. The hard values are easy to acquire, but UWIS needs to make clear decisions on what objectives they are pursuing and focus on content that leads to the desired outcome. Assessing the hard data reveals whether or not they are achieving set objectives.

**Soft values - Post**

| Motivation | | | Social roles and interactions | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Why would the user want to see the post | | | Are user roles and interactions within the range of good social conduct | |
| Intellectual value | Social value | Cultural value | Social Roles | Social interactions |
| o Uncertainty reduction o Search for meaning | o Platform activities o Social ties | o Community culture o Commitment to engage within the channel | Continuously mediated between actors in a social network, especially by observing and copying the behavior of others. That happens in an interactive way, i.e., any role is contingent on the other actors oscillating between cooperation and competition | Dynamic, changing sequence of social actions and communication between individuals or among groups. However, as all actors constantly try to define their current situation, they strive for a superior social role and attempt to sign up other actors in support |

Table 9: Soft values in a post

**Hard values - Post**

| Content | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What type of content are you or other users posting and how it is performing | | | | |
| Content quality | Content valence | Content volume | Performance | UGC attributes |
| o Content characteristics (interactivity, vividness) o Content domain (entertainment, information) o Narrative Styles | o Emotions (anger, anxiety, joy) o Tonality (positive, negative) | o Counts / Volumes | o Impressions (how many times the post has been seen) o Actions (Likes / Shares / comments / Clicks) o Action rate (Impressions / actions) o Reach (Number of unique people who have seen the post) | o Content characteristics (interactivity, vividness) o Content domain (entertainment, information) o Narrative Styles o Counts / Volumes o Emotions (anger, anxiety, joy) o Tonality (positive, negative) |

Table 10: Hard values in a post

**Soft values – Channel**

| Motivation<br>Why would the user want to follow the channel | | | Network Structure<br>The size of the channel, coinciding userbase, tie-strength and the amount of clustering between the users | | | Social roles and interactions<br>Are user roles and interactions within the range of good social conduct | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intellectual value | Social value | Cultural value | Connections | Distribution | Segmentation | Social Roles | Social interactions |
| o Uncertainty reduction<br>o Search for meaning | o Platform activities<br>o Social ties | o Community culture<br>o Commitment to engage within the channel | o homophily, multiplexity, mutuality, networkclosure | o centrality, density, distance, tie-strength | o clustering coefficient, betweenness | Continuously mediated between actors in a social network, especially by observing and copying the behavior of others. That happens in an interactive way, i.e., any role is contingent on the other actors oscillating between cooperation and competition | Dynamic, changing sequence of social actions and communication between individuals or among groups. However, as all actors constantly try to define their current situation, they strive for a superior social role and attempt to sign up other actors in support |

Table 11: Soft values of the channel

**Hard values – Channel**

| Channel statistics<br>What type of content are you or other users posting and how it is performing | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content quality | Content valence | Content volume | Performance | UGC attributes | Size |
| o Content characteristics (interactivity, vividness)<br>o Content domain (entertainment, information)<br>o Narrative Styles | o Emotions (anger, anxiety, joy)<br>o Tonality (positive, negative) | o Counts / Volumes | o Impressions (how many times the post has been seen)<br>o Actions (Likes / Shares / comments / Clicks)<br>o Action rate (Impressions / actions)<br>o Reach (Number of unique people who have seen the post) | o Content characteristics (interactivity, vividness)<br>o Content domain (entertainment, information)<br>o Narrative Styles<br>o Counts / Volumes<br>o Emotions (anger, anxiety, joy)<br>o Tonality (positive, negative) | o Likes<br>o Follows<br>o Number of actors |

Table 12: Hard values of the channel

# 4 RESEARCH ON SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS IN DIVING INDUSTRY

## 4.1 Examining successful diving organizations on social media for benchmarking

This study analyzed some of the most popular organizations and groups among Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Pinterest. The objective was to find relevant information on why the most popular diving organizations are so attractive. The interactions between the organizations and their users were examined, as well as the content these organizations posted on their channels. Diving organizations were also examined for their metrics, specifically hard values. The purpose is to provide UWIS with referential data like what is a good rate of actions of a specific post. Supplying UWIS with benchmarks allows them to gain perspective and further improve their social media efforts. Through internet search engines, the search engines build in the social media channels and cross-referencing followers, the accounts listed below are some of the biggest among the diving industry on Facebook and of Instagram (Tables 13 and 14). The accounts are divided into three main categories, first one being the companies that focus on producing diving equipment. The second category consists of operators and stores that mainly deal within diving industry and the third category hosts the organizations and semi-organizational groups within the diving industry. The numbers presented in the tables are taken in November and December, so some fluctuation has likely occurred. The tables list the amount of likes of the channel, the estimated amount of posts within a week and calculated average those actions per posts. The channels are listed by the amount of likes they have and from these tables we can see some indication of what should UWIS expect and what goals should they establish in order for them to remain achievable.

| Company | Likes | Average amount of posts per week | Average amount of likes per post | Average amount of comments per post | Average amount of shares per post |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Body Glove | 361,588 | 4.125 | 121 | 1.3 | 4.3 |
| Cressi | 177,313 | 11.75 | 282 | 4.2 | 43.9 |
| Mares | 137,503 | 6.5 | 111 | 5.6 | 8.8 |
| Scubapro | 126,578 | 7.875 | 391 | 8 | 40.1 |
| dive poseidon | 99,533 | 25.75 | 566 | 10.3 | 4.6 |
| Operator | Likes | Average amount of posts per week | Average amount of likes per post | Average amount of comments per post | Average amount of shares per post |
| Vallarta Adventures | 106,689 | 3.5 | 85 | 4.8 | 9.3 |
| SCUBA | 90,069 | 8.125 | 110 | 3.7 | 14.9 |
| Divers Direct | 80,732 | 0.666666667 | 15 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| Scuba Travel | 79,035 | 9.75 | 25 | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| Dive Point Red Sea | 45,378 | 1 | 139 | 3.5 | 6.3 |
| Organization | Likes | Average amount of posts per week | Average amount of likes per post | Average amount of comments per post | Average amount of shares per post |
| PADI | 1,527,606 | 23.25 | 830 | 25.4 | 147 |
| Scuba Diver Life | 1,443,509 | 62.5 | 357 | 8.4 | 47.2 |
| Scuba Diver Girls | 899,548 | 6.5 | 4,200 | 39.1 | 392.3 |
| Oceana | 834,101 | 18.66666667 | 570 | 13.3 | 99.5 |
| Scuba Diving Magazine | 301,026 | 28 | 501 | 11.8 | 70.8 |

Table 13: Selection of the most popular diving related organizations on Facebook

| Company | Followers | Average amount of posts per week | Average amount of likes per post | Average amount of comments per post |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scubapro | 140,424 | 2.83 | 6,411 | 33.0 |
| Body Glove | 59,979 | 5.42 | 1,076 | 3.7 |
| Cressi | 44,174 | 6.92 | 1,441 | 8.4 |
| Maresjustaddwater | 24,455 | 0.50 | 493 | 3.0 |
| Aqua Lung | 16,300 | 2.67 | 428 | 3.4 |
| Operator | Followers | Average amount of posts per week | Average amount of likes per post | Average amount of comments per post |
| Epic Diving | 33,768 | 10.92 | 637 | 4.6 |
| scubatec_ | 29,893 | 24.00 | 287 | 10.1 |
| Kona Honu Divers | 1,176 | 4.50 | 102 | 4.9 |
| Scuba.com | 1,057 | 3.67 | 55 | 1.7 |
| oceanictech | 790 | 2.33 | 86 | 0.6 |
| Organization | Followers | Average amount of posts per week | Average amount of likes per post | Average amount of comments per post |
| discoverocean | 819,583 | 13.50 | 30,570 | 461.4 |
| Oceana | 221,253 | 30.17 | 1,295 | 6.0 |
| paditv | 186,473 | 7.67 | 6,303 | 162.4 |
| Scuba Diver Girls | 160,335 | 4.17 | 3,947 | 23.2 |
| Scuba Diver Life | 99,602 | 1.75 | 2,217 | 17.4 |

Table 14: Selection of the most popular diving related organizations on Instagram

The following table depicts the some of the largest accounts of Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn according to their amount of followers or in YouTube's case, subscribers (Table 15).

| Twitter | | LinkedIn | | YouTube | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Company | Followers | Company | Followers | Company | Subscribers |
| Scubapro | 12,731 | Body Glove | 1361 | Body Glove | 5,323 |
| Body Glove | 9,967 | Seac | 1246 | Cressi | 4,164 |
| Aqua Lung | 6,534 | Aqua Lung | 1058 | Scubapro | 4000 (estimated) |
| fourth element | 3,868 | Cressi | 558 | Dive Rite | 2,314 |
| Apeks | 3,400 | Apeks | 460 | Mares | 2,294 |
| Operator | Followers | Operator | Followers | Operator | Subscribers |
| Scuba.com | 12,848 | Divers Direct | 1503 | Simply Scuba | 11,448 |
| Diviac | 10,633 | Vallarta Adventures | 1318 | Scuba.com | 1,580 |
| Scuba Travel | 10,148 | Scuba.com | 865 | Vallarta Adventures | 878 |
| Simply Scuba | 10,094 | EmperorDivers | 388 | Eco Dive Center | 500 (Estimated) |
| Vallarta Adventures | 7,688 | Scuba Travel | 77 | Force-E divers | 136 |
| Organization | Followers | Organization | Followers | Organization | Subscribers |
| Oceana | 253,354 | PADI | 21540 | PADI | 20,869 |
| PADI | 82,794 | Oceana | 5107 | Dive Magazine | 5,719 |
| Scuba Diver Girls | 49,251 | Divers Alert Network | 1344 | Divers Alert Network | 3,002 |
| Scuba Diving Mag | 42,893 | BSAC | 1045 | Cousteau | 2,558 |
| Dive Magazine | 27,053 | MARINElife | 653 | Scuba Diver Girls | 2,466 |

Table 15: Selection of the most popular diving related organizations on Twitter,
LinkedIn and YouTube

The tables presented above give insights on what channels UWIS itself should be following in order to keep up with the industry news and events while also contributing a context for which they can compare their activities. Another reason for selecting the accounts is their content. Because these particular accounts are some of the biggest and most popular within the industry, they were selected as exemplary actors. The table below lists some of the recent activity of the selected organizations (Table 16). The table provides UWIS with examples of what pictures and videos appear to perform well for other accounts, what tone and context should be used when posting content on social media and how to encourage users to like, share and comment posts.

The posts are selected from two most used social media channels, Facebook and Twitter. They are selected because of their strong engagement numbers when compared to other posts within the same account. At a glance, we can see that high quality pictures that represent the diving industry or marine life seem to be a convergent theme across all posts. The messages of the posts are always tied in with the picture and they are usually very short and to the point. Facebook posts can be a little longer, but still tend to stay within a couple sentences. The posts seem to divide in to two different categories, one focusing on creating a sense of solidarity through a common interest. These posts don't seem to have a direct aim of promoting or passing information on a product, but rather consolidate the position of the company in the eyes of the users. This is consistent with the findings of Hauser and Wernefelt (1990, 12) and De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder and Lacobucci (2001, 15) in that branding communication and relationship investments raises the commitment levels of users and therefore encourages customer loyalty.

The posts that are more focused on promoting and detailing product information clearly emphasize the attributes of the promoted products in pictures and in texts. The message always encourages finding out more with the use of hashtags and direct links. There are two major reasons for this, first one being the utilization of UGC. As Daugherty et al. (2008) and Christodoulides et al. (2012) explain in their research, UGC is perceived as a more trustworthy source of information, thus making it a more effective way of marketing a product. Users who tend to follow a brand on social media channels and who are involved in UGC have a higher probability of being brand advocates (Daugherty et al., 2008, p. 7-8, Christodoulides et al., 2012, p. 2-3). Utilizing the brand advocates to share the information and discuss about it is a highly effective way for a company to market their products. The second important aspect of including a call-to-action relates to the aspect of driving traffic from the social media to sites where more information is given or an option for purchase is found. The calls-for-action also strongly relate to keeping the users engaged in the company content, thus making them more involved and committed.

The #ocean is calling.
#aqualung #adventure #scubadiving #rediscoveryourself

This looks like a good place to take a #humpday nap. #aqualung
#resiscoveryourself #adventure #underwater #ocean #explore #optoutside
#sharks #water #repost 📷 by Frazier Nivens
Stuart Cove's Dive Bahamas

**Body Glove** @bodyglove
The team has been hard at work testing the new #freediving suits. Coming soon my friends... Photo by @cameronchacker
👤 Doghousephotography ja Cheyne Magnusson

↩    ↻ 6    ♥ 14    •••

**Aqua Lung** @AquaLungDivers
Fight procrastination - go diving.
#aqualung #rediscoveryourself #scuba #scubadiving #adventure #ocean #explore

↩    ↻ 5    ♥ 10    •••

Let there be warmth! New Body Glove wetsuits, now available.
Check out all the goods here: http://bodyglove.com/2016-wetsuits/

**Body Glove** @bodyglove
Dig in and go, and you will achieve.
#BodyGlovePerformer11 #AllThingsWater #SUP

↩    ↻ 8    ♥ 23    •••

Aqua Lung @AquaLungDivers
Intelligently engineered to help you focus on what you #love. @pcousteau @ashlancousteau #aqualung #scuba

13 10    9    •••

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY. Some ideas for a weekend in Europe: "Diving in Verzasca River", wonderful photograph by Marc Henauer. Diver in crystal clear water of Verzasca river in Ticino - Switzerland. This dive site is dangerous if you don't respect the security rules. But it's a fabulous world with rounded rock. You can see across the surface from the bottom of the river. It's a kind of underwater cathedral.

What color do you prefer? Now you can match your S600 reg cover to your hose protector to your mouthpiece to the Sea Wing Nova fins. Yup now you can be all color coordinated. (Not all colors are available in all regions)

Cressi @CressiItaly
scubadiving.com/introducing-cr … #Cressi #air mask #buceo #scuba #diving #scubadiving #oceans #underwater #window #underwaterPhotography

**Introducing the Cressi Air Mask**
The Cressi Air mask has an extremely hydrodynamic shape and is significantly smaller in size.
scubadiving.com

13 3    6    •••

Lamar and Jared are in Iceland this week diving around the island with a group from Rango Extendido. Check out this short video where Jared tells you about some of the gear they brought with them to do the dives.

We are extremely happy to announce that we are in final assembly of the M28 computer. We can't wait to get this incredible product out to our customers and appreciate your continued patience.

**fourth element** @fourth_element
Come to our stand at #TheDiveShow @DIVESHOWS at Birminghmam NEC and enter our FREE PRIZE DRAW to WIN a #fourthelement Proteus II Wetsuit!

**Cressi** @CressiItaly
Are you ready for what's about to happen? Subscribe to our NEW Youtube Channel CRESSI1946, you can see what's coming

0:06

**SCUBAPRO** @Scubapro
Explore another world without leaving this one #scuba #scubadiving

**SCUBAPRO** @Scubapro
Life is better in the sea #scuba #scubadiving #mondaymotivation

**Suunto Diving UK** @SuuntoDivingUK
#SuuntoEonSteel has a full colour display and can be set up in #classical or #graphical view. suunto.com/en-GB/Sports-W …

Essential kit. #SuuntoDive

**The one thing every freediver needs**
Ute Gessman began freediving before the first dive computers were on the market. The AIDA sport officer and competition freediving judge would instead in those days carry a manometer (a mechanical device for measuring pressure) down...
SUUNTO.COM
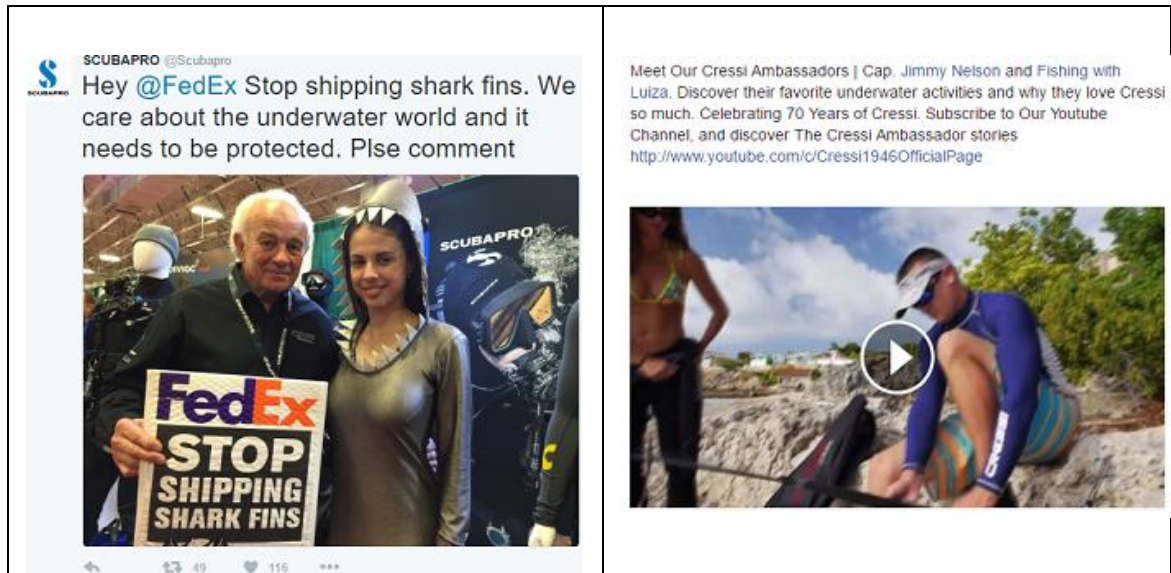
Table 16: Example posts from successful diving companies on Facebook and Twitter

## 4.2 Non-academic literature and case studies on social media marketing

Research background focused on the foundational characteristics of social media and the usefulness that it introduces to companies. Academically researched material forms a proven foundation for utilizing social media, but because of its nature, academic research on this subject often trails behind the current trends. Because social media channels add new features and change existing functionalities, and because user behavior may also fluctuate from time to time, it is important for UWIS to also read about the most current best practices that online outlets focusing on social media have to offer. This chapter focuses on the advices and recommendations that the previous literature review did not cover. Because some of the material is possible not tested at all, some level of skepticism should be applied. The material is largely about utilizing social media in general, with some additional insights on individual channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest. To conclude, this chapter introduces some companies that have used social media to great extent and can be regarded as admirable examples of utilizing social media to benefit their objectives. This research describes the companies, the situation they faced and the measures they took in order to achieve the decided goals.

| Source & author | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forbes.com<br><br>Agrawal, Aj | Hootsuite.com<br><br>Sorokina, Olsy | Jeffbullas.com<br><br>McVicker, Dan-<br>iela | Entrepreneur.com<br><br>Sykes, Timothy | interaction-<br>design.org<br><br>Dam, Rikke |
| **Lessons** | | | | |
| Know your destination | Create social media strategy before the pro-files | Choose the proper channel | Be consistent | Focus on telling your story and creating interac-tions with that story |
| Dividing re-sponsibility | Choose the right social networks | Be consistent and regular | Use all social net-works | Quality is al-ways better than quantity |
| Create conver-sion opportuni-ties on your website | Save money on customer service with social me-dia | Start and stay in the conversation | Format content to optimize for each platform | Create your own content |
| Create a blog | Expand by re-cruiting new team members on social media | Engage your audience so they want to share your con-tent | Push on those net-works that really work well | Deliver value in content not sales/marketing messages |
| Complete your profiles | Build an online community of brand ambassa-dors | Stay on top of social media changes | Make sure that your content aligns with your message | Listen to your community |
| | Evaluate social media strategy regularly | Use the 80/20 rule | Some important content won't be popular, but you still need to post it | Be available to your community |
| | Don't be afraid to experiment | Use amazing headlines | Find a balance between popularity and business | Learn to thank people for shar-ing, comment-ing, etc. even if you don't agree with them |
| | | Know when to post | Use social media to amplify all of your business and marketing efforts | Remember, so-cial media is a long-term strat-egy |
| | | Have a crisis plan | | |

Table 17: General advices on utilizing social media from non-academic literature

The advices and lists about utilizing social media are listed on a table below (Table 17). Many of the lessons overlap each other, which is reassuring news, since it would

seem that the general opinions on exploiting social media are congruent. Almost all the sites encourage a company to create a strategy first, being consistent and interesting while listening to the community and engage users with own created content. Literature review provided similar guidance, so this material seems to also strengthen the message of the academic studies. However, some of the advices presented in the articles were not introduced in the literature review. McVicker (2016, 9) from jeffbullas.com encourages companies to only post about the company products or services every fifth time. The rest four posts should be related to developing trust and relationships and getting to know the brand. Academic literature doesn't directly address this topic, though Hutter et al. (2013, 7) briefly point out that filling the channel with uninteresting and unattractive content will likely lead to users abandoning the channel.

Some of the other non-academic material follows similar lines, although not so accurately. Sykes (2016, 2) from entrepreneur.com and Dam (2016, 1) from interaction-design.org both advice the companies to focus on interesting content, rather than just trying to promote sales. The only listed advice that is inconsistent with previous research is Sykes's (2016) lesson of using all social networks. The article states that in order to reach all potential customers and fans, a company needs to exist on all the major social media channels. Prior literature from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 6-7) and Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9) argue the opposite when they state, that focusing the efforts on those channels that are relevant for the company and used by those the company wishes to engage with, are the channels worth choosing. Olsy (2014, 2) and Agrawal (2016, 1) are also in line with the academic research when they state that deciding the objectives and strategy of social media presence involves selecting the most suitable channels to work with.

| Source & Author | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Facebook | | Twitter | |
| Blog.hubspot.com  Mineo, Ginny | Forbes.com  DeMers, Jayson | Socialmediaexaminer.com  Kingston, Charlene | Cio.com  Schiff, Jennifer |
| **Lessons** | | | |
| Use a recognizable profile picture | Optimize page for SEO | Organize whom you follow with lists | Optimize Twitter bio |
| Fill in all the about information | Descriptive and memorable username | Change your visual branding | Find influencers and experts in your areas and interact with them regularly |
| Coordinate cover photo, pinned post and call-to-actions accordingly | Use descriptive keywords in your About section | Twitter bio: Tell people what you do, explain how you help people and show a little personality | Get colleagues involved |
| Don't post too often | Ensure you've used the appropriate category | Consider creating a Twitter landing page | Tweet regularly, use images and videos |
| Analyze your efforts | Optimize page images | Carefully listen and follow | Don't be afraid to ask for retweets and mentions |
| Post during 13.00 – 16.00 | Make most of pinned posts | Add Twitter link to other locations | Track mentions and respond if appropriate |
| Focus on interesting content | Use groups to engage with target market | Follow your customers | Retweet, favorite tweets and follow trends and hashtags |
| Try using paid services to amplify successful organic posts | Encourage social sharing with Facebook buttons and plugins | Don't follow bots or people who don't tweet | Use promoted tweets |
|  | Reach comes with interesting content | Add photos to tweets | Integrate Twitter with other marketing efforts |

Table 18: Advices related to Facebook and Twitter from non-academic literature

The advices focusing on Facebook and Twitter (Table 18) are agreeable with the previous set of advices and the research background. Having the right information in correct form and keeping the channels in good appearance are discussed on every selected source. Creating interesting and visually appealing content is also mentioned in every listed source, while also being mentioned on numerous occasions by Peters et al.

(2013, 9, 11, 15). What literature review didn't comment on was the time of posting. Mineo (2015) from hubspot.com states that a good time to post is around 13.00 – 16.00 (Mineo, 2015, p. 4). DeMers (2015) explains that there is no universal right time for everyone, but companies should test the most engaging publish times for themselves. However, he suggests that 13.00 – 15.00 seems to yield higher engagement (DeMers, 2015, p. 6). Ellering (2016) in an article about best times to post on social media suggest that companies should post during the end of the week around 12.00 – 15.00 on Facebook. He continues to state that in order to reach other companies effectively with Twitter, the times to post are during workdays around noon to afternoon (Ellering, 2016, p. 4-7). Kingston (2012) and Schiff (2013) don't seem to offer anything that hasn't been addressed in the previous segments. The general view on both lists seems to be on social media listening, since both sources highly emphasize the importance of knowing where the discussions are, who's holding them and how important it is to engage with them. These same matters were also discussed by Zhang and Vos (2014, 6-8) as they examined the concept of social media listening and how it can be an important asset for companies.

The research background didn't cover the functionalities or best practices for YouTube or Pinterest at all. Because of their nature and the requirements UWIS has, YouTube and Pinterest are regarded as optional channels to engage in. Therefore the rigor of which YouTube and Pinterest are inspected is decidedly lower than what of which Facebook and Twitter. However some information on how to use these sites more efficiently is likely to come in need at some point, thus this short depiction (Table 19). With the values presented in the literary review accompanied by the general lessons on utilizing social media, the instructions don't give much purposeful material to add. Emphasizing the importance of titles and descriptions can be viewed as an additional element to focus on. No matter the social media channel, paying attention to content components is hugely important, but discovering YouTube videos and Pinterest pins largely depends on well chosen keywords and a good title. This aspect is brought up by Reynolds (2011, 2), The wishpond blog (2014, 2) and Fontein (2016, 8) who both state that descriptions should be short and onto the point, while also providing a possibility to follow a link. Radice (2015) on the other hand focuses more on what should a company pin on their account. Creative use of own content like blog posts and pictures is important and though the effectiveness is questionable, UWIS might do well to try and add other blog content to their Pinterest channel, when in use (Radice, 2015, p. 5). The second very important aspect mentioned in all sources is cross promoting between maintained channels. This is also noted in previous literature, as for example Kietzmann (2011, 9) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2011, 8) accentuate the need for coherent social media strategy, which includes promoting content on multiple channels.

| Source & author | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| YouTube | | Pinterest | |
| Business2community.com The Wishpond blog | Businessinsider.com Reynolds, Sue | Postplanner.com Radice, Rebekah | Blog.hootsuite.com Fontein, Dara |
| Lessons | | | |
| Regular content | Customize your channel | Convert profile to a business account | Pay attention to captions |
| Include calls to action | Curate content | Use rich pins | Cross-referencing |
| Monitor and respond to feedback | Share playlists on website and blog | Pin your evergreen blog content | Include call to actions |
| Customize your channel | Create original content | Take newsletter tips and turn them into quote graphics | Add Pin It –button to website |
| Put thought in your titles | Tag videos and channel | Use RSS reader to add your favorite blogs and actively pin their content | Create appealing content |
| Choose the right category and tags | Pay close attention to descriptions and titles | Visit sites like BizSugar.com to find relevant content | Know image requirements |
| Write a great description | Cross-connect | Follow accounts with similar interests | Study the most relevant categories |
| Consider collaborations | | Check analytics | Pin useful content |
| Use subtitles, not annotations | | | Pin about your customers |
| Don't confine your videos to YouTube | | | Create themed Pinterest boards |

Table 19: Advices related to YouTube and Pinterest

Cross promoting between multiple channels and creating interesting content could be considered the single most important reason, why one company, Emerson salon, achieved a revenue increase of 400% within two years (Brouat, 2011, p. 6). Emerson salon was established in 2008. According to the case study author, the initial launch had spent much of the founders' money and unfortunately customers were scarce. The company decided to focus on online activities and promoting the business in social media (Brouat, 2011, p. 1-2). The strategy of the company was to center their activity on the website (figure 16). The most important attribute of the website was the ease of booking an appointment. The other crucial component was the company blog that hosted weekly postings about hair design and coloring. The blog posts are vibrant with pictures and

videos, with a clear emphasis on entertainment. This blog content was then distributed via Facebook and Twitter to the target audience, young urban. The main goal of Facebook and Twitter for Emerson salon was to drive traffic to the website and blog. Blog content was focused for the target audience for effective use, but Facebook and Twitter were also being used for building the community. The company offered coupons on Facebook and shared local news on Twitter. Both channels were also used for asking feedback and comments (Brouat, 2011, p. 4-5). In 2011, 75 % of the company clientele came because of the engaging internet marketing and the strategy seems to hold well, since the company is still running and producing blog posts on a monthly basis. The case study of Emerson Salon further consolidates the argument made by Koenig and Schlaegel (2014, 28-29) about the importance of corporate blog as an authentic, credible, interesting and relevant source of content.
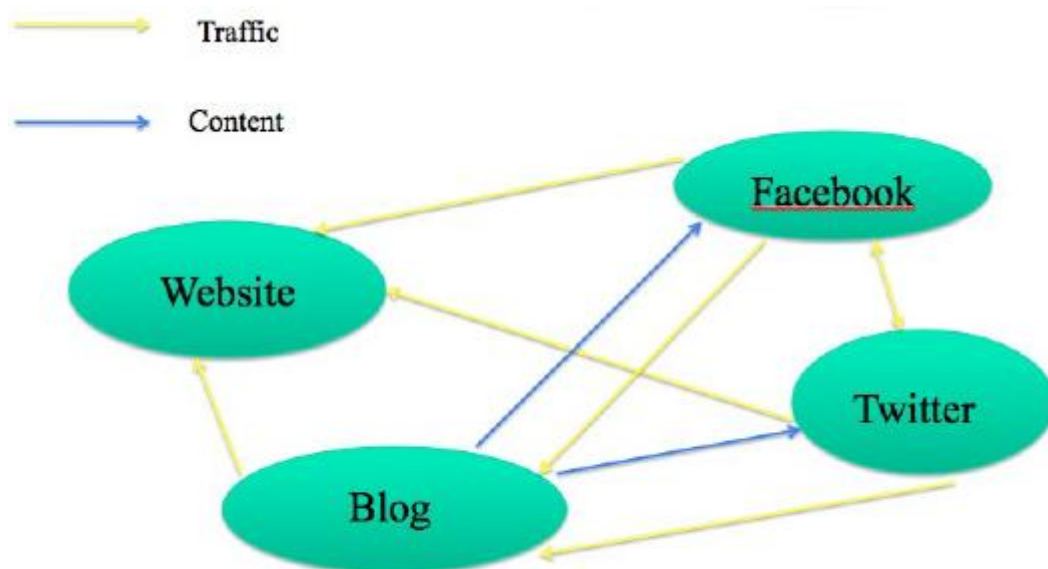


Figure 16: Emerson Salon social media strategy (Brouat, 2011, p. 6)

Another great example of utilizing company blog and promoting it on Twitter and LinkedIn, while also employ additional social media listening tactics comes from AT&T. Sander Biehn worked at AT&T in sales and has written an article about his experiences with the social media campaign AT&T launched in late 2011. According to the material, AT&T was struggling to keep its customers. Relationships had suffered for the past 5 years and sales were low. In order to invigorate customer relationships and grow sales, the company decided to employ a new kind of social media campaign, focusing on creating helpful and relevant content for the target companies. Biehn (2011, 2) describes how they created 10 solutions for the target companies and then started to search "persons of interest" among the clients and industry professionals. The primary source of content was the company blog, which was focused on customer's business

and their problems. The goal was to provide helpful and personal content for the target companies so AT&T could improve the relationships and encourage engagement among participants. This goal is line with Koenig and Schlaegel's (2014, 27) research on corporate blog acceptance, where the authors conclude that emphasizing usefulness is a key factor in influencing the attitudes and intentions positively towards a corporate blog. The next issue for AT&T was how to get the content moving. The company relied on Twitter and LinkedIn in passing the information and engaging customers. With both channels, persons of particular interest were found and Biehn and other company members started actively interact with those people. This included re-tweets, replies, comments and referrals to the company blog. When there was positive news about a target company, the AT&T team would congratulate, while also mentioning some contacts from AT&T. The team was highly active in engaging in any situations possible, where some kind of exposure through being helpful and professional could be found. The results were clear. While also improving the relationships between the companies and creating conversations online, AT&T was also being requested to bid for projects. Within 18 months from the start of the campaign AT&T had gained $47 million in new business, directly linked to social media efforts (Biehn, 2011, p. 4-5).

A case study about the use of Facebook's groups comes from Intel, the American technology company. In an interview conducted by Stelzner (2010) Intel's Facebook page manager Ekaterina Walter describes how their Facebook page evolved during the early years. According to the interview, in the very beginning Intel wasn't paying much attention to their social media channels. Walter tells that the initial growth was organic, with about 3-4 % increase in fan base every month. Eventually they decided to start answering questions and posting interesting, engaging content. This brought the monthly growth numbers to 10-12% (Stelzner, 2010, p. 1). The focus group was always the tech-setters and "geeks", but now with a more active participation, Intel was able to engage more audience, increasing the reach of individual posts, thus resulting in more conversion. Focusing on content that would be liked, commented and shared was the most important goal for Intel. They concentrated on content that was appealing and requested by their audience, while also trying to appear more human by sending them holiday-wishes and asking about their interests (Stelzner, 2010, p. 3-4). Walter explains that learning what works with their audience has been a journey of trial and error and as she further states, there is no golden rule for what works, so companies need to figure that out themselves. The effectiveness of relevant Facebook content is justified as Mangold, and Faulds (2009, 6-7) and Dijkmans et al. (2015, 8) have found in their research. While not only creating the content the audience is looking for, Walter from Intel also advices companies to integrate existing social media strategy with the whole company strategy (Stelzner, 2010, p. 5). This insight is also confirmed by studies done by Kaplan and Haenlein (2009, 7-8) and Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9).

## 4.3     Interviews

An important part of this research was the interviewing of the main potential customer segment for UWIS, with some additional requests sent to companies selling scuba diving equipment and other diverse organizations related to scuba diving. The interviewees were chosen by selecting the companies that had the highest amount of followers in the initial industry review. Some additional channels that also had successful presence on social media were approached for interviewing. The questionnaire consisted out of eleven broad questions, though because of the semi-structured foundation of the questionnaire, additional questions were asked. The reason for semi-structured approach was for the opportunity to emphasize on matters important for UWIS and to make it possible for interviewees to answer the questions via email, if they would rather choose it. The companies were approach by email, where the purpose of the research was stated and company-respondents were asked for their preferred medium of answer, though Skype was recommended.

The interviewees comprised out of marketing coordinators or CEO's when dealing with diving operators. When interviewing other companies, the range of positions fluctuated from managing editor to assistant managers. The questions were divided thematically in to two segments (Table 20); the first set of questions was about the company's current social media presence, their goals and how the company's would estimate the success of their social media. These questions are mainly for the purpose of providing UWIS another source of information on how to benchmark their own effectiveness. The insights on target companies' social media success also provide precedents and understanding on how UWIS could use social media to their benefit. The second set of questions was more on the core of the whole interview. The questions regarded the target companies' behavior and content that would best cater to their interests. The aim of these questions was to give UWIS awareness of the type of content and tonality that would likely raise the most interest among target companies.

| Questions |
| --- |
| Please freely describe your social media presence and goals |
| How do you view your company's success on social media? |
| What factors do you believe have lead to this current situation? |
| Could you name a specific success and a specific miss in your social media behavior? |
| |
| When searching for a new social media outlet to follow, what characteristics/factors do you look for? |
| What type of content is most engaging for you? |
| What channels do you normally use to get information? (e.g. information about new products, services, innovations) |
| What characteristics do you feel have negative influence on a social media channel? |
| What sort of content or attributes would you look for from an influencer (an account with high followerbase), were you to follow one? |
| How does your company engage in conversations in scuba diving forums? |
| |
| What would you say to a company taking their first steps in social media? |

Table 20: Interview questions

Out of the 48 companies that were asked to participate in this research eventually 9 agreed and answered the research questions. The answers are listed in order of the questions (Table 21). Some of the answers are noticeably shortened, but the purpose of the answers and meaning is still in place. The conducted interviews lasted around 20-30 minutes, while when interacting through email, one or two additional set of questions were sent after the first response. Often these replying emails contained further questions on why the company viewed their social media success the way they did and why do they follow particular social media channels, i.e. what makes the content engaging.

| **Please freely describe your social media presence and goals** |
|---|
| Use of different social media platforms as they were intended to be used and not as a sales outlet. Staying present without us asking audience to "do" something. |
| Presence on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and Pinterest. Though every channel has a purpose, Twitter is not actively moderated and the content comes through Facebook. Focus on having a presence, sales and branding –wise, on those channels that their customers use. Properly and regularly updated content with active sharing and commenting fits their brand and is beneficial for sales as well. The goal is to increase sales and increase customer loyalty. |
| Watch statistics and see what posts do well. Try to do more posts that do well. |
| Twitter, Google+, Facebook and Pinterest. Goal is to drive traffic to websites and increase brand awareness. On Twitter the goal is providing news about environmental issues and raising awareness. |
| Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube. Goal is to drive traffic to website, engaging, entertaining and informative posts. |
| One person controls social media endeavors (Facebook). Try to be as active as possible and not be too sales oriented. |
| Goal: Inspire people to go dive and travel more. Associate the brand with nice diving locations and beautiful pictures. Selling through inspiration with beautiful content. Facebook is the strongest medium, followed by Twitter. YouTube and LinkedIn not so much. Use Twitter to cross-promote and tend to publish more on Twitter simply because of the nature of the platform. |
| Mail channels, Facebook & Twitter. Goal is to raise brand awareness and drive traffic to website. |
| Facebook and YouTube are the most important. Facebook is used for community reach and communication. YouTube is used for showing information and attracting business. Twitter account, though not much used, is only for building links and shouting out news articles. LinkedIn is not so active. Get a lot of contact requests and occasionally read an article. Hired people for marketing about 4 years ago. Before that, marketing was shared among staff. Social media was the main reason for hiring. |
| **How do you view your company's success on social media?** |
| The only thing that makes us unique is our personality and our voice. Our staff is one of our strongest assets. |
| We think we are doing very well. |
| - |
| Unfortunately tends to be too sales oriented which has a negative impact on followers. Also not always enough time or an opportunity to post content on Facebook. |
| Insufficient results in driving traffic to websites, better at raising awareness. |
| Strong analytical base in order to see what working and what's not. |
| Somewhat successful. The traffic to the website from social media could be better. Still working on finding the most engaging content. |
| Good international presence, but difficulties in regional markets. Is becoming apparent |

| |
|---|
| that some paid campaign must be placed in Facebook. |
| Strong. The ones they work on are constantly maintained. Get their branding and exposure from the main channels. Social media marketing ties in with the search engine marketing, because the traffic from social media makes traffic on their website, which keeps the company in good rankings with searches. |
| **What factors do you believe have lead to this current situation?** |
| Harnessing user generated content. We encourage our visitors to share their content with us for a chance to be featured on our pages. |
| Paid advertising and sponsored posts on Facebook. Original content created for the customers enjoyment is the key. Posts daily and frequently associates with social media influencers. |
| Good connections to existing clients which leads to repeating quests. Clients send pictures and videos that are then shared on Facebook page. |
| Positive situation: Fair amount of relevant posts with great photos |
| Strong brand awareness. Focus on interesting, relevant created content that is presented in an interesting way. |
| Negative situation: Lack of time and content. |
| Some of the content is successful and also the blog is very good at driving sales. |
| Because of the situation at hand, just posting isn't going to be enough and some promotion must be used to secure visibility. |
| Positive situation: Go where the clients are. Posts promote lifestyle and scuba diving, anything about aquatic life (Animals in particular). Generally posts that get the most engagement are the ones with aquatic life. |
| **Could you name a specific success and a specific miss in your social media behavior?** |
| Because we do it "ourselves", we sometimes get distracted by other tasks and at times not as active as others. |
| Cooperation with social media influencer yielded a good amount of attention via YouTube. |
| Twitter followers increased when started posting several times a day, including retweets. Facebook followers increased with advertising. |
| Rapid success in Instagram with quality content and active engagement with audience. Twitter has proved to be hard channel to successfully use, due to content focus, that is not suitable for the fast pace of Twitter. |
| Success: faithful elderly customers asked for help in the attempt to get a diving record in Guinness Book of Records. Good social media exposure. Miss: they have a property restaurant and they sometimes post content related to the restaurant. This is not successful. |
| - |
| YouTube-video about Maldives was a success. Promoted via social media but also with paid marketing. They believe that videos would be highly beneficial in raising awareness, but it's harder to justify budget-wise. "Even the organic results were better than |

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| twenty other [average] posts" (regarding the video) |
| Twitter yields more success than Facebook, likely due to the content we have and the current algorithm that shows what you have missed. |
| Have done a couple of high profile campaigns. GoPro launched a competition and worked with the company. Couple of videos from that competition prize was viewed by GoPro-followers, so that got the company some good exposure |
| **When searching for a new social media outlet to follow, what characteristics/factors do you look for?** |
| Follows: Scubaboard, PADI, Sports Diver Magazine, DAN, Scuba Diving Mag on twitter |
| How they are connected to us, are they potential customers, can their content be used in any way, is there a place for cooperation. |
| - |
| Don't search for new social media outlets. Takes too much time. |
| Unique and personal content. |
| Do not explicitly follow. Sometimes happen to glance at something. |
| Official sources of information, NGO's. Wants to be involved in the protection of the sea and marine life. Also follows main brands like Suunto and companies they have partnership with. |
| Appealing content. |
| PADI, Scubadiverlife and some prominent divers and thought leaders. Want to see what's happening in the general consensus of diving industry. He also follows some channels outside dive industry just to see what's working for them, for fresh input. |
| **What type of content is most engaging for you?** |
| Videos. The content needs to be relevant, useful, and original. Perhaps tagging us in the post would be the best way to get attention. |
| Short videos and beautiful pictures. Content that is similar to ours. |
| Everything about diving, underwater wildlife. Also tech diving. |
| A good photo. |
| Quick, interesting content. Visual content such as short videos and GIFs. |
| On the point advertising and videos are the most engaging content. Partly because Facebook automatically plays videos. |
| Lists, articles on specific marine life. |
| News articles about the scuba diving industry (including business news). Underwater pictures. |
| Anything that resonates with the lifestyle they are trying to promote and offer. Anything that raises environmental awareness. Any business success stories and case studies. |
| **What channels do you normally use to get information? (e.g. information about new products, services, innovations)** |
| Hootsuite, Social media today, Pinterest marketing boards. |

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| We follow some selected accounts on Facebook, mostly competitors. |
| Frankwatching.com |
| Feedly, on topics of diving and the marine environment. |
| Twitter and Email. Usually I know what I'm looking for, so I go straight for the original source. |
| - |
| The previously mentioned NGO's. Also read the websites of diving magazines and blogs. Visit events and happenings in order to get to know the people they work with. |
| Twitter, industry magazines and dive shows. |
| Reads reviews from Google, Amazon, Trip advisor. They also look at forums and Facebook groups to see what the community feels. More likely to invest or purchase if it came down to word-of-mouth or it came down to social media internet recommendation, And from these two, word-of-mouth is the strongest. |
| **What characteristics do you feel have negative influence on a social media channel?** |
| Any sales pitch. |
| Only resting on shared content and incorrect spelling. |
| - |
| Content that is just self-promoting. |
| Brands associating themselves with trends, events, holidays, etc. seen as cheesy or out of touch. |
| Pushing the same content. Pushing content that does not fit with the group's purpose. |
| They feel a channel should be a role model of sorts. Therefore nothing that violates their standards is approved e.g. abusing marine life and so forth. |
| Too much irrelevant information. |
| Not a particular feature, but rather the audience. Some people are quick with their conclusions and statements and ideas sometimes go unchecked. |
| **What sort of content or attributes would you look for from an influencer (an individual with high followerbase), were you to follow one?** |
| One that follows the same idea and approach that we have to social media. |
| Look for content that we would like to have ourselves. Content that is in line with company strategy |
| - |
| Interesting posts, not too much advertising. Someone with whom had some interaction, e.g. they've commented on or shared one of our posts. |
| Interesting perspective, sense of humor and personal touch |
| - |
| They want to follow a role model. Show respect and care about the ocean. Interesting and new content is highly appreciated. |

Don't like selling on social media channels. Giving information is good, but trying to convince to buy is off-putting.

See their thoughts, equipment, technology, opinions. Follow marketers like Seth Godin or entrepreneurs for some outside ideas. Influencers within the dive industry like PADI just to keep up to date with the diving industry.

**How does your company engage in conversations in scuba diving forums?**

Not much.

Not at all.

At the moment no, not enough time.

We don't.

We typically don't.

Sometimes. When there's time they give advices, but it's pretty seldom.

Yes. The company tries to position itself as a helpdesk in scuba forums. Uses mostly scubaboard.com

We don't. They used to be valuable source of information, but that is no longer the case.

Tries to. The amount of possible channels has gone up, so forums are dwindling. Facebook groups offer somewhat similar experience. Uses Facebook groups for bringing awareness about the company and where they work. Also gives people advices or guidance.

**Advices**

Interaction is the key. Also be aware what kind of content is appropriate for specific channel. Use Facebook groups to differentiate followers/fans/enthusiasts.

Decide on the brand image, how you want to be portrayed and stick with it. Find your audience and budget some money for social media ads. Don't buy followers that are not right ones for you. Pick the people who are interested in your product.

-

Prioritize content and brand value. Do what you do best, Don't copy others, but create your own personal content.

Don't push your product too much but be interesting and relevant by sharing pics and videos. Try to share what you would like to see on your timeline. What would you as a person find interesting and worthy of sharing. Start slow with only few channels. Think about whether you need the channel or not. Do it properly. Don't think that social media is free and you can just start posting and people would follow you. Instead make a plan and put a budget behind it and do it properly.

-

Don't spread yourself on multiple channels, identify your customers and stick to those channels. And don't just be reactive in terms of responses to clients. Don't just wait for the negative review to say something. Recognize good stuff and respond to people. That is going to help when those negative issues come up.

Interaction is the key. Also be aware what kind of content is appropriate for specific channel. Use Facebook groups to differentiate followers/fans/enthusiasts.

Decide on the brand image, how you want to be portrayed and stick with it. Find your audience and budget some money for social media ads. Don't buy followers that are not right ones for you. Pick the people who are interested in your product.

Table 21: Interview answers arranged by question

According to these answers, if UWIS wants to reach potential customers via social media, the most opportune channels would include Facebook and Twitter. Other major channels like Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn also have some merit as a means of driving potential customers to website, but the reach with these channels seems to be significantly lower. UWIS should also note, that in order to regain and keep a good amount of engagement with users, social media is very time consuming. Many of the companies stated that they don't have enough time to fully exploit social media, and because of this, set goals are not entirely accomplished. While every company enjoys relative successful social media presence, the few companies that have a strong strategy and clear goals would indeed seem to yield better results. Those that focus on creating content for the audience while excluding sales posts for the most part, are most effective and engaging overall. This is in line with the statements collected in the non-academic literature, where practically every source emphasized companies to concentrate on providing entertaining and relevant information to the audience, thus keeping the sales-pitching to a minimum.

The companies were very congruent in their opinions about attractive content. Merely sharing other people's thoughts and distributing news is not enough to evoke a desire to follow an account. Neither does information that is not relevant or in par with the industry ideals, that being for example environmental issues. Almost all the interviewees explicitly mentioned that posting sales related content is not interesting and they would not follow or engage with an account that behaves in this manner. Content and presence that was perceived positively was original, personal content that is helpful, insightful and informative. Referencing to other accounts and engaging with others in a way that accentuates the other companies rather than self was considered a positive way to attract attention and promote good relationships between companies. The advices the companies were giving on social media behavior also tie in with the content they themselves wish to look at. This would further promote the assumption of focusing the content in a way that caters to the audiences needs and is interesting to them. Considering this information, UWIS needs to find the time and other resources to create content that is interesting in both form and content.

Interviews were mainly used to help UWIS center their attention and social media activities to suit the requirements of the target audience. Interviews were also used to verify the learning provided by academic and non-academic literature and the benchmarks of successful diving organizations in their activities online. In both respects the

interview was a success. Analysis of the social media activities performed by other major diving related channels contributed very similar insights of that of the interview. Environmental, marine and lifestyle topics with vivid and relevant content were seen as profoundly engaging and the way of interacting with the diving community encourages honesty, personality and positivity. The interviewees also disregarded channels that would use marketing messages excessively as well as content that would not provide anything unique or personal. When examining the posts successful diving organizations publish, many of these aspects are in use. This also lines well with literature, as Kaplan and Haenlein (2009, 8), Hanna et al. (2011, 8) Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9) and Dijkmans et al. (2015, 8-9) all emphasize the importance of creating content that resonates with the target audience and promotes engagement.

# 5 RESULTS

## 5.1 Forming the social media plan

The aim of this research is to provide UWIS with a social media marketing plan with an emphasis on raising product awareness and driving traffic to their website. When regarding the aim to design theory, the social media plan is the artifact being produced. The artifact should address the issues of whom to engage with, what channels to use and what are the most effective ways to engage on social media. While finding the solutions for these problems, the artifact also has to contain the knowledge and tools to effectively measure the social media presence and actions that UWIS is performing. Therefore, the proposed social media strategy is constructed out of three parts, including information on how to construct, curate and analyze social media efforts (Figure 17). The structure of the plan is largely designed with the material supplied by companies providing social media utilization services. Authors like Lee (2015) LePage (2016), Daoud (2016) and Sailer (2016) offer templates and guidelines to create a social media plan that incorporates the strategy, audience, industry overview, goals and additional resources to reduce uncertainty of starting social media engagement and having clear vision and purpose on the objectives of engaging in social media. These presented guidelines are combined to create a plan suitable for UWIS as a startup company targeting a specific industry with a distinguishable product. The most important feature of the plan is the strategy, which contains the information regarding the overall guidelines for social media conduct. Within the context of strategy, three different levels are identified. The primary strategy holds the general objectives of UWIS on what they wish to achieve, who are they targeting and what kind of content is UWIS going to use to achieve the objectives. The level of detail is then further discussed in channel strategy, where individual channel responsibilities are assigned and future objectives introduced. Channel content strategy takes the most concrete look, depicting the type, tone and amount of content that is being posted through each channel. The purpose of three leveled strategy is to clearly define the responsibilities and purpose of each channel while giving conceptual idea on what content is being posted on those channels.

Figure 17: Social media marketing plan for UWIS

The actions hold the actual guidelines and instructions on how to and what is UWIS supposed to do. Social media listening –section includes the accounts and groups that UWIS needs to monitor and the keywords to search for in order to find the conversations to engage in and to have a better understanding of the general discussion inside the industry. Timeframe consists of monthly views on what content and how much should be posted on every available channel and at what time. The purpose of timeframe is to help in the creation of monthly schedule, where posts and topics are planned ahead and also to help evaluate the current strategy and whether future social media actions require adjusting, to better suit the company needs. Goals and benchmarks include the monthly estimates of how many followers, how many actions, impressions and other important metrics UWIS is trying to achieve. The metrics are first evaluated from the growth of companies in a similar position and the numbers are then estimated with the help of control examples and own results. Analysis forms the basis for future improvements in the strategy and content. The metrics and factors measured in the analysis portion are largely from the works of Hoffman and Fodor (2010, 6) and Peters et al (2013, 6-9). The framework work monitoring social media performance incorporates the hard value and traditional, but important numbers presented by Hoffmann and Fodor (2010), while Peters et al. (2013) accompany the framework with softer values, those of which are harder to measure, but still may prove important when weighing the effects and engagement of social media interactions.

Instructions gather some guidelines and information that is not crucial for in a sense of the whole strategy, but are good to know and provide valuable material to aid UWIS in their efforts. Build instructions hold a very simple checklist for each channel, so when UWIS is ready to start utilizing the strategy, they can make sure that all information and appearance of the channels are in order. As the non-academic literature implies, poor presentation does not encourage users to follow (DeMers, 2015, p. 1-2, Schiff, 2013, p. 4, Fontein, 2016, p. 7-8). Schedule presents UWIS with an example of how to organize and plan the posts well ahead of time. This allows for a more coherent structuring of what content to posts, since the data is in one place. The schedule also allows UWIS to swiftly glance what posts and content has been recently posted and if

there's an opening for certain type of content or for certain channel. Schedule is also a good place to indicate whether some posts have performed well or very poorly (Olsy, 2014, p. 2-5). The third section of instructions presents a list of helpful and very necessary online tools. The list mostly comprises out of free or partly free applications and services that make social media listening, managing all the social media channels and posting much less time consuming. Unfortunately, because of the frantic nature of the business, some tools may be closed within a year and some new services have probably come up, thus searching for new social media tools is a worthy task to perform occasionally. Post examples give UWIS some frame of reference on what content is liked within the social media space for divers. UWIS can study the examples and use them as a base on how to formulate the appearance and the written content of the posts, though they should remember that according to the reviews, academic and non-academic literature, own and personal content is preferred by users online.

## 5.2    Social media plan evaluation

While according the methods of design science research presented by Hevner et al. (2004), this study evaluates the social media plan by comparing it to the existing literature from both academic and non-academic sources, studying the distinctive features of the diving industry and the people involved in it and lastly, consulting with UWIS on their resources and capabilities to utilize proposed plan. The most important aspects of the plan, like structure, strategy and social media listening aspects are derived from the literature. This framework is designed to incorporate all important aspects of the social media undertaking performed by UWIS, so changes to structure are supposed to be minimal. The content however, is expected to be rigorously examined and modified not only in this building phase but long before it also. The first iteration of the plan consisted material concerning social media listening. As UWIS was and still is in early steps of its product development and resources are limited, engagement originated from content published in their own channels was not a viable option. Therefore, to gain better understanding of the industry and the actors involved in it, UWIS was to utilize the methods of listening to social media conversations and locating influencers, topics and points of interests for further use. The social media listening plan was evaluated and improved to match the resources and probable customers that UWIS would want to target.

The second iteration included all of the rest of three-structured plan. The strategy and targeted audience were the most important aspects to evaluate from UWIS's angle. Additional modifications were made by comparing the insights collected from the marketing study that UWIS was also performing. Targeted audience was focused to target slightly older users, a fact also noted on the intended content strategy. Channels strategy

was also evaluated thoroughly with giving more emphasis on company blog and website. As a technology company with knowledge and resources focused on a niche technology, UWIS wants to position itself as a professional brand that offers innovation and safety. This second iteration evaluation also included examining some of the tools collected to help UWIS. From the lists of potential tools a small collection of most useful applications was selected. Because the resources for UWIS are limited, it was seen as a benefit to focus on the most effective tools, so the possibility of wasted time would be minimized.

The third and final round of iteration was performed with the help of marketing agency. The goal was to unify the efforts of traditional marketing with social media efforts as highly recommended in literature. The whole social media plan was evaluated keeping in mind the possible changes that would be made UWIS's website and the brand as a whole. The strategy was examined from the top down to match the message other online and offline content would transmit. A particular emphasis was on how the roles of different social media channels would emphasize the UWIS's core media, their website. The goals were also established during this third evaluation round. Building a powerful brand was seen as one of the most important aspects of social media objectives, while also placing extensive significance to content valence and customer service. With these additions the social media plan was ready to be presented to UWIS, with the very important side note, that the plan should be revisited and developed on a regular basis in order to fully exploit the characteristics of social media.

# 6 DISCUSSION

## 6.1 Key findings

The goal of this study was to construct an effective social media marketing plan for UWIS Oy This included considering the different aspects that constitute social media, the interactions between companies and users and the efficient ways to utilize the relation between these two. The study achieved this through data collected from social media channels related to diving, social media literature and studies about utilizing social media in a business environment. The attention is then centered to focus on what kind of content and behavior is seen in a positive way in the diving industry and what factors influence users and other companies to become a fan or a follower to a certain account. Interviews and examining the successful organizations within diving industry was the primary source for information on the domain, tone and subject of effective content. The presented social media strategy was constructed by combining the collected information and guidance, while keeping in mind the goals and objectives of UWIS. A few interesting suggestions can be argued based on the collected material.

Firstly, the academic literature still seems to hold very well when comparing it against the current non-academic literature and some of the successful case studies. Many articles examined in this study examined the building blocks and effective utilization of social media. Whether analyzing individual channels or social media behavior as a whole, the suggestions and advices given in the academic literature are still worth applying. Kelleher and Miller (2006, 16) encourage companies to use conversational and personal voice when engaging in social media. The same personal voice is advocated by Schiff (2013, 2), McVicker (2016, 5) and Dam (2016, 5-6). Applying this conversational and personal behavior will help companies to achieve better brand recognition and presence over social media channels. This in turn, increases the attachment of the social media users who see the company posts as stated by Sinha (2011, 13) and Hutter et al. (2013, 8). These perceptions are also agreed by Dam (2016, 5-6) and McVicker (2016, 5) from non-academic literature. Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9-10) present insight on how to engage in conversations on social media and how a company should prepare for such engagements. Understanding the channels a company works is surprisingly poorly emphasized aspect given from the non-academic literature, but other attributes of basic channel constructing and engagement knowledge is shared by the e.g. Mineo (2015, 3-4) and Radice (2015, 1-10). On building and managing social media channels, the academic literature offer rather straightforward tips channels with very similar content compared to the authors working for social media service companies. For example, the thoughts shared by Schiff (2013, 4-5), Olsy (2014, 1-2), Agrawal (2016, 1-2) and Sykes

(2016, 2-3) are exactly what Hanna et al. (2011, 7-8) and Kietzmann et al. (2011, 9) have studied about integrating social media into the company's whole marketing strategy. Mangold and Faulds (2009, 6-9) and Kaplan and Haenleins (2010, 8-9) advices on how to be social are also shared with DeMers (2015, 2-5), Dam (2016, 4-7) and Fontein (2016, 3-4). Both parties encourage companies to strive to be personal, while also being active and interesting. Even though existing social media services change and evolve in a swift pace and new services are emerge from time to time, the academic groundwork on social media knowledge is still very accurate. Companies being held back by the perceived disadvantages of social media would do well to read some of the existing literature work examining these areas.

Second finding relates to the content dive organizations in social media would like to experience. According to the interviews, diving organizations would most likely enjoy relevant, useful and personal content. While this is hardly revealing information, the organizations further explained what content usually gets their attention in social media. Almost every interviewee feels that videos and pictures depicting diving, marine life or underwater lifestyle are most interesting for them. When moving into more detailed topics, environmental awareness and marine life tend to have the highest probability of drawing ones attention. Based on their answers, content that is similar to theirs is usually perceived in a positive attitude and informative posts, like news and articles about the industry are pleasantly received. Every respondent emphasizes the importance of visual aids, like pictures, videos and GIFs (low-resolution video clips). These visual aids help in stopping the social media users to take a second and look at a particular post. Captivating headline and short, engaging message also aid in catching the viewers attention. Statistics show that posts with image get 18% more clicks in Twitter than those with no image, while the chances of a tweet being retweeted increases 150% if the tweet included an image (York, 2017, p. 8). In LinkedIn an increase of 98% to engagement rate, when a posts has images (Lister, 2017, p. 5). On Facebook alone, posts with images get 179% more interaction when compared to the average. Also, posts that end on a question receive a whopping 162% more interaction than an average post (Lowe, 2016, p. 2). The statistics show that working to create a compelling post on the outset and throughout is a serious task, but will more likely result in a much positive manner. As the interviewees stated, original and interesting content are likely to get their attention and creating an appealing post is a crucial part in that.

The interview also contained the opposite question to most interesting content. According to the diving organizations irrelevant, repeated and self-promoting content are the most unpleasant types of posts. Majority of the interviewees listed these three things as highly repelling, while some also added that only relying on shared content or showing content that is not accepted in the diving communities, like abusing marine life, results in avoidance. Going against well established social behavior, like interfering with

underwater life is easy to understand as a topic not to joke about, but the most harmful acts seems to be the ones companies could easily and without better knowing, do. As some of the material examined in this study also highlights, being active and participating often is a virtue that every company should strive towards (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, Sashi, 2011, Nobel et al. 2012, The wishpond blog, 2014 and Sykes, 2016). This can create a situation where content is being pushed into the channels just for the sake of getting posts. This content may be seen as irrelevant, uninteresting and ultimately the whole channel could be seen as undesirable to follow. Simply pushing marketing content is also perceived as a harmful for a channel, since the promotional material can be regarded as too pushy, uninteresting or contradictory to the nature and purpose of social media. This assumption that too much irrelevant content can be harmful for the channel was also suggested by Hutter et al. (2013, 7) in their study about social media interactions in regards to user engagement. Statistics also support this claim. According to a research from Sproutsocial.com, 46% of users will unfollow a brand for posting too many promotional messages on social media (York, 2017, p. 10). A more correct way of approaching content creation would likely be Dam's (2016, 2) suggestion, where she encourages companies to focus on quality first and quantity second. This mantra can be seen for example in the postings of Suunto, the Finnish dive gear manufacturer or Body Glove, the water sporting goods manufacturer from United States. These companies, although publishing regularly, often have a significantly longer downtime between the posts when compared to similar corporations like Cressi or Scubapro. Even though the publish rate varies, the content is interesting and relevant enough to keep all the above mentioned companies on top of social media rankings among diving goods manufacturers. When comparing the two findings, we can clearly see that, while the additional information and examination of the industry UWIS operates in is certainly necessary and beneficial. Divers as a whole seem to be a group very similar to any other. The abstract guidelines presented in the literature would most likely form a good social media strategy even without deep existing knowledge of the industry. This is not to say that industry analysis is without reason. What we attain from additional information is important verification of the content perceived interesting by the target audience and additional social media behavior information that allows UWIS to focus their marketing efforts more effectively.

## 6.2    Implications for research

The correlation between academic and non-academic literature appears to be very strong. Even though social media platforms change rather frequently and new hugely popular platforms emerge occasionally, the implications presented by the academic ma-

terial is visibly seen in the actions of successful social media channels and in the advice given by the social media experts of their fields. Behavior and interaction on social media channels are well researched and for a good reason. The main purpose of social media as platforms is to allow people to share and contribute their thoughts to a larger audience and this is where companies can also utilize the power of social media. Analyzing different social media platforms on how they emphasize certain aspects of content creation or interaction is also well scrutinized so companies can more easily identify the key focal points of different social media platforms and exploit them accordingly. However, there seems to be a considerable lack of material concerning social media strategy formation or guidelines for creating a social media presence on a particular channel cannot be found. Non-academic literature concerning this topic is plentiful, but for some reason no frameworks or studies about strategy building or plan creation exists. Even though platform like Facebook and Twitter alter their functionalities or add new features the research shows that the core principles of social media studies still reign true. Therefore examinations focusing more on practical approaches when utilizing social media would be needed. For example, the social media plan constructed in this study takes most of its influence from non-academic sources, where information is much more abundant.

The reasons for social media users to prefer some company content above other are very interesting. Content of choice for the selected diving organization would be that which is interesting, informative and personal. Respondents were looking for a new angle or a fresh look on current matter. The tone or way of conveying the message was not so much an issue as the importance of being distinguishable from the rest of the actors and having regular and consistent content. Furthermore, According to the interview, promotional material, irrelevant information and flooding the channel with subpar content were seen as an exceptionally negative concern among the interviewees. Relying too heavily on content made by others gave some of the respondents the feeling of a channel not having a personal voice or any thoughts of their own. These findings indicate that the field of industry is a very important aspect in assessing possible preferred content. This is not surprising, but what is interesting is that there could be a level of shared interests among potential customers no matter the industry they deal in. The interviewees stated they enjoyed high quality content that in relevant and has a personal touch. These qualities can be moved to whatever situation available. Therefore, researching the similarities between multiple social media users from many different industries could yield advantageous information for companies to capitalize on.

## 6.3     Implications for practice

As this study has shown, academic literature concerning social media marketing for companies is still valid and usable for companies. After reviewing a number of non-academic materials it is recommended for companies to introduce themselves to at least a few of the most crucial studies on social media. Even though non-academic findings are well worth reading, a more profound understanding is within reach for companies that take a closer look at the works of e.g. Mangold & Faulds (2009) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, 2011). They offer a more in-depth look at the possible reasons behind the expected behavior or outcome. When a company understands the reasons behind why some posts work they way they do or what interaction is usually perceived in a positive way, this knowledge can be improved and developed into new innovative methods of conducting social media marketing. Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) also re-mind companies that while marketing on social media can give a sense of extensive reach, spreading marketing content too broadly may be an error. When reaching for an effective message with viral potential, it is often more beneficial to focus on creating an interesting message and distribute it to many disconnected subcultures, thus increasing the probability of the message traveling more effectively to a broader audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011, p. 5). Studies conducted by e.g. DeVries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012, 7) on the relation of post content to user performed actions offer good insight on how forming a post of including different types of content results in a relatively ex-pected behavior from users. Equally important to the construction of the message is its nature. Shamma and Hassan (2009) and Schivinski et al. (2016) have studied the effects of company material and user generated material in relation to brand awareness and value. The authors concluded on an important issue regarding the objectives a company is focusing on and how they should plan to achieve it. It would appear that raising prod-uct awareness can be effectively achieved with company generated content, while commitment with users is better accomplished with the help of user generated content and by interacting with users (Shamma & Hassan, 2009, p. 9 and Schivinski et al., 2016, p. 15-16). In B2B context, however, not just being active on pre-existing social media channels is enough; therefore many companies have decided to create a company blog. Brennan and Croft (2012) and Koenig and Schlaegel (2014) have studied some the posi-tive characteristics a corporate blog should posses. While being an excellent medium to maintain relationships and increase brand awareness, blogs allow two-way communica-tion between the company and the customers (Brennan & Croft 2012, p. 18). Koenig and Schlaegel (2014, 27) additionally concur that enjoyment acts as an important part of the adoption process (Koenig & Schlaegel, 2014, p. 27). Therefore, while UWIS might want to keep a certain level of professionalism in their blog, they must not do it in the expense of perceived enjoyment. The case studies on AT&T and Emerson Salon also

emphasize the potential blogs can have as tools for raising awareness, sales and engagement towards the company. For UWIS the blog should be a medium of directly targeting their B2B audience, underlining the content they appreciate. There are distinct benefits for also looking into lighter literature on the subject. The lists and advices that many of the social media –focused sites offer are helpful and sometimes propose solutions that are very detailed and channel-specific. Case studies on other subjects are also invaluable, like how Intel has gradually raised their followers on Facebook by creating interesting and relevant content not just for tech enthusiasts (Stelzner, 2010, p. 2-4). Also, for some of the most recent social media platforms like Pinterest and Snapchat, the academic literature is understandably limited. Thus, making preparations for engaging in a new social channel might only be possible through non-academic literature.

The findings concerning diving organizations fondness for specific content offer some interesting implications. Understandably these organizations are interested in news and articles regarding their field of industry. Therefore the content being posted must be relevant for the targeted audience. The posts should also offer some insights and a personal touch besides being relevant and interesting. These three aspects of formed the core of an interesting posts at least for the interviewees. In diving context this meant that interviewees enjoyed pictures and videos concerning marine life, scuba diving and content regarding environmental issues. On the other hand, the interviewees shunned away from channels with abundance of marketing messages and posts that offered little or no information or enjoyment. These findings can also be seen from the posts presented in this study (more examples included in the plan). Marine life, particularly images of sharks, dolphins or whales attract attention with almost certain probability. Also images with beautiful lighting effects or "serenity" are likely to be more engaging. Lastly, there appears to be clear advantage in including images of beautiful people in light clothing in an already interesting post. From what the literature and examples of successful posts can teach about forming good posts, is that the message needs to be short and to the point, some personality should be shown to the audience and there should be a meaning in the posts that the reader can identify. Though, that is not to say, that the meaning needs to be the same for the company and the user. When talking strictly from company perspective, being active, consistent and insightful are some of the most important aspects to incorporate in social media endeavors. For UWIS the findings indicate that they should focus on interesting, relevant, beautiful and informative content. As they are a technology driven company, the content needs to support this and offer those, who are interested in their product a chance to get a closer look at their operations. For all companies, forming a post that is appealing to look at, informative and short, offers a route for more information, if necessary and provides opportunity to engage are crucial in making a good post.

## 6.4    Limitations and future research

Because of the initial broad intake of information about social media and its advantages for companies, this study introduces multiple reasons and concrete examples on why companies should engage in social media. Even though the final focus was strictly on diving industry and B2B relationships, the insights and methods presented in the research background and in the actual examples gathered from different social media channels offer a good starting point for every company to increase their knowledge of social media marketing and how a company should behave on social media. The interviews conducted for this research also strengthen the foundation of prior literature, since the answers are to a high degree in line with academic literature. Reviewing the differences presented in academic works like Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) and Kietzmann et al. (2011) to the recent non-academic literature provided by companies offering social media services present very much the similar information. Companies like Hootsuite.com, CoSchedule.com and leadtoconversion.com display the information in a more detailed and perhaps concrete form, but the underlining issues affecting the reasons are the same. Understanding the core principles in social media channels, including basic knowledge about user behavior forms a good basis for engagement in social media. This study introduces those core concepts and whatever the industry a company is involved in, the knowledge is applicable.

However, some problems and insufficiencies occur. The interviewing of operators and organizations in the scuba diving industry was concluded with not enough recipients to achieve credible long-term results. While the answers of the nine companies that took part gave additional insights on how should UWIS coordinate their social media efforts, the amount of feedback is too low for a comprehensive conclusion on the matter. Unfortunately, there was also not enough time to collect data from neither the initial social media strategy nor the complete social media strategy. The first revolution of the designed artifact, which focused solely on social media listening, was presented too late and UWIS was extremely occupied with organizational business. Thus, the start of the social media listening process was delayed by some time and developments in this matter could not be thoroughly examined. The initial purpose was to improve the overall social media strategy with the information given by initial social media listening efforts. Due to lack of time the evaluation of both the artifacts in its states, the social media listening strategy and the final form of social media strategy received too little time to fully be analyzed. Therefore, their insights could not be taken into consideration when performing iterative enhancements on the final strategy.

For future use, the findings presented in this study should be better researched. Whatever may the industry be, the interview needs more recipients to provide decisive information on how to engage the target users on social media. Another interesting topic

for future studies would be the actual gained benefits of applying the strategy presented in this study. Analyzing the efforts UWIS have performed after the start of using the strategy for a lengthy time would provide valuable information for companies analyzing their presence in social media. What has worked and what has not worked for UWIS and the reasons behind the results. Also, if the strategy is missing some key-elements that should be included or something that only impedes focus from the more important aspects. Studying the long term effects of UWIS's social media endeavors would no doubt be beneficial for the field of social media marketing.

# 7    CONCLUSION

Social media can be a highly effective instrument of cutting business costs, raising brand awareness and engaging customers. While benefits are quite obvious, companies are still doubtful about the actual gains presented they feel they could get. This study examines the use of social media as a tool for companies to use to achieve numerous benefits, including but not limited to the ones mention above. The study collects academic and non-academic material concerning social media marketing with the final objective of creating a social media marketing plan for UWIS Oy, a Finnish startup developing an innovative underwater navigation system for the diving community. While the goal was to create a social media plan for UWIS, the material and insights that lead to that said plan are the most important parts of this study. From literature we learn that understanding the strengths and functions of a particular social media channel is crucial for companies. Different channels are meant for different kinds of interactions and knowing what message and what type of content to publish on a specific channel is very important. The literature also highlights some of the techniques a company can utilize when engaging with their users. Being personal, active and catering to the interests of the audience dramatically increases the company channels attraction. Concentrating on creating content that inspires engagement from the users is a great way of committing these users to your channels. Creating interaction further facilitates the creation of user generated content, which in turn is a great way to decrease service costs, nurture brand loyalty, increase the trustworthiness of the channel and raise the likelihood of generating brand advocates. Additional emphasis was also given to the ability to monitor and review the executed social media efforts. A separate framework was created in order to analyze UWIS's performance and improve the functions that are not performing well.

The literature formed a basis for a more detailed look on social media in a diving context. Analyzing the actors and examining the behavior of probable clients offered a chance to compare literature findings with the content creation methods used by other diving companies. Interviewing some of the potential clients also provided good insights on what content is perceived positively and what is not. The cross-examination found that scientific literature is still well usable by companies to form a basic framework for social media engagement. Interviews and analysis of other actors proved that marine life, environmental issues and accentuating scuba diving as a great way of life were among the most attractive subjects for divers. Same examination also determined that some of the worst content relates to excessive use of marketing messages and providing uninteresting and irrelevant content. By combining the learning from the literature with the pragmatic details of the industry, the social media marketing plan was constructed. Lastly, this study reviewed the creation process of said plan by contrasting it against the resources and goals set by UWIS and what other marketing channels they

intend to use and emphasize. The final product formed a framework for UWIS to use as a baseline for future operations. As with any strategy, this one also needs to be revised regularly, but it compiles the most important aspects of social media engagement in an accessible way.

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