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UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN A TOURISM COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

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The commissioner of this thesis is a Finnish tourism organization offering tourism services and attractions. The main goals for the thesis are to examine the use of social media in marketing and provide a social media marketing plan for the commissioner.

The theoretical background of the thesis consists of subjects such as marketing, social media and social media marketing. Firstly, the theory discusses the principles of marketing and secondly, the social media phenomena as well as its use as a marketing tool. The research methods used in this thesis are qualitative in nature. Desktop research was conducted to explain the different theoretical phenomena in this thesis.

A social media marketing plan for the commissioner is the outcome of this thesis. It presents the commissioner a strategic plan to implement social media to their marketing efforts to enhance the overall marketing performance of the company. The results of this thesis suggest that the commissioner should join the appropriate social media channels and start a social media campaign by engaging their audience through various methods. Additionally, the theoretical background provides an in depth view of social media marketing to introduce the commissioner and the possible reader to the phenomena.

To conclude, the social media marketing plan presented for the commissioner aims to support the implementation of social media. The social media marketing plan is based on the current situation of the commissioner company in order to introduce a concrete and guided plan for the implementation process. In the future, for social media marketing to reach its full potential, the commissioner should invest more resources in it, and conduct a more detailed and synchronized marketing strategy that also integrates social media.

Keywords: social media, marketing, social media marketing, tourism

TIIVISTELMÄ

Oulun seudun ammattikorkeakoulu
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Tämän opinnäytetyön toimeksiantaja on suomalainen matkailutuotteita tarjoava yritys. Työn tarkoituksena on tutkia sosiaalista mediaa ja sen käyttöä osana yrityksen markkinointia. Yritys ei ole ollut mukana sosiaalisessa mediassa eikä sen käytölle ole olemassa suunnitelmaa, minkä vuoksi opinnäytetyössä toteutetaan teorian pohjalta yritykselle sosiaalisen median markkinointisuunnitelma.

Työn teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu markkinoinnin ja sosiaalisen median teorioista sekä sosiaalisesta mediasta osana markkinointia. Teoriaa käsitellään ensin yleisellä tasolla, minkä jälkeen sitä pohditaan toimeksiantajan kannalta. Pääasiallisesti työssä käytettiin laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää. Työn teoreettisen viitekehysten luomisessa käytettiin kirjoituspöytä tutkimusta.

Työn tulos on sosiaalisen median markkinointisuunnitelma, jonka tarkoitus on tukea toimeksiantajan sosiaalisen median strategista käyttöönottoa osaksi yrityksen markkinointia. Suunnitelmassa analysoidaan yrityksen nykyistä tilannetta, jonka perusteella toteutetaan konkreettinen ja ohjeistettu suunnitelma sosiaalisen median käyttöönottoa varten. Tulokset osoittavat, että toimeksiantajan tulisi ottaa käyttöön ne sosiaalisen median kanavat, joista sille on eniten hyötyä pystyäkseen parantamaan yrityksen näkyvyyttä sekä kommunikaatiota asiakkaidensa kanssa. Lisäksi työn teoriaosuus tarjoaa lukijalle ja erityisesti toimeksiantajalle mahdollisuuden tutustua sosiaaliseen mediaan.

Tulevaisuudessa yritykseltä vaaditaan lisää panostamista sosiaaliseen mediaan sen onnistumisen kannalta. Yrityksen tulisi myös luoda uusi markkinointistrategia, jossa sosiaalinen media olisi osa yrityksen markkinointia ja integroitua viestintää. Koska yritys ei ole aikaisemmin käyttänyt sosiaalista mediaa osana markkinointiaan, sen käyttöönotto vaatii resursseja ja koko yrityksen osallistumista.

Asiasanat: sosiaalinen media, markkinointi, markkinointi sosiaalisessa mediassa, matkailu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 7

 1.1 Tourism Industry 8

 1.2 Kemi Tourism Ltd 8

2 MARKETING..... 10

 2.1 Definition of Marketing 10

 2.2 Marketing Mix 11

 2.3 Integrated Marketing Communications 12

 2.4 Digital Marketing 16

3 SOCIAL MEDIA 18

 3.1 What Is Social Media? 18

 3.2 Social Media for Business 19

 3.3 Types of Social Media 20

 3.3.1 Facebook 22

 3.3.2 Twitter 23

 3.3.3 YouTube 23

 3.3.4 Flickr 24

 3.3.5 TripAdvisor 24

4 MARKETING IN SOCIAL MEDIA..... 26

 4.1 Social Media Strategy 27

 4.2 Four Steps to Social Media Marketing Strategy 28

 4.3 Ways to Market Your Business in Social Media 31

 4.4 Measuring the efforts 34

5 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN 36

5.1 Situational Analysis	36
5.1.1 Product Analysis	38
5.1.2 Customer Analysis	40
5.1.3 Competitor Analysis	41
5.1.4 PESTE Analysis	43
5.1.5 SWOT Analysis	45
5.2 Objectives and Issues	47
5.3 Strategy	48
5.4 Action Program	53
5.5 Resources	59
6 METHODOLOGY	61
7 CONCLUSION	62
8 DISCUSSION	64
REFERENCES	67

1 INTRODUCTION

Today social media is a trending phenomenon and a huge part of people's everyday lives and at the same time gradually gaining more momentum in the business world. Consequently, marketing has received a totally new kind of approach with the rise of the Internet and e-commerce. To compete in a global world, businesses cannot rely on traditional marketing anymore. With digital marketing the whole world is your market and everyone with an Internet connection is your audience. Furthermore, social media has provided a unique opportunity for businesses to communicate with their audiences as the Internet has evolved beyond being a source for information to being more and more social – people seeking to interact with each other offering businesses a channel to connect with their audience on a more personal level as well.

The thesis was commissioned by Kemi Tourism Ltd for the purpose of researching the possible use of social media in the company's marketing. Moreover, the study on the possible use of social media is outlined to the marketing of the two main product offerings of the commissioner. The main goal of this research is to study the use of social media as a marketing tool for business and its possible effects on the commissioner company. This will be followed by a strategic social media marketing plan for the company.

The framework for this research revolves around marketing, social media and its use in marketing. The thesis concentrates on social media and its usage in marketing and is outlined to the social media channels most favorable for the commissioner company and industry. The theoretical background for the research includes literature on marketing, tourism, social media and social media marketing. The thesis is conducted as a qualitative research and the chosen method is desktop research. The theory will be combined with practical issues to produce a social media marketing plan for the company.

As social media becomes more and more popular among people and businesses, this thesis awards the commissioner with an opportunity to examine the possible implementation of social media and what could be achieved with the addition of social media to their marketing activities. The thesis

presents its findings to the commissioner and provides a suggestion in form of a social media marketing plan that can be applied to the company's current marketing activities if found appropriate.

1.1 Tourism Industry

Tourism can be described as travel for recreational, leisure or business purposes with the journey and the place being outside the usual environment as well as the nature of the travel being temporary (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill 2008, 11-12). The industry of tourism has been growing constantly during the past decades becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism is considered to be one of the key players in international commerce representing the major income for many countries. Consequently, the success of tourism industry has spiked up the competition and diversification of the destinations. (World Tourism Organization 2011, date of retrieval 18.11.2011.)

The industry has recovered from the recent recession of 2008-2009 by reporting a growth rate of 6.6% in international tourist arrivals with the most visited region being Europe. The international tourism generated an estimated US\$ 919 billion (693 billion euros) worldwide in 2010 (up 4.7% from 2009). Finland as a tourism destination reported an increase of 7.2% between the years 2009 and 2010 in tourist arrivals which makes up for 0.8% of the world's share in tourist arrivals in 2010. The Finnish tourism industry generated US\$ 2.8 billion in 2010 which in turn composes for 0.7% share of the world's total. (World Tourism Organization 2011, date of retrieval 18.11.2011.) It should be noted that even though the arrival rate grew in 2010, the received profits were down from the previous years. World Tourism Organization (2011) estimates the international arrivals to nearly double by the year 2020 with the top tourist destination region still being Europe.

1.2 Kemi Tourism Ltd

Kemi Tourism Ltd is a company located in Kemi, Finland and operates several tourist attractions located in the area as well as handles the tourist information center for the city. The two main attractions are SnowCastle and Sampo Icebreaker, and in addition to these, the company operates the Kemi Gemstone Gallery and the Theater Restaurant. (Kemi Tourism, PowerPoint –presentation,

19.09.2011.) The outcome for this thesis project is a social media marketing plan focusing on these the main attractions and the specific social media channels found appropriate to them.

The vision for the company is “to be the leading partner in providing and developing tourism related products and services in Kemi and Sea Lapland area” (Kemi Tourism, PowerPoint –presentation, 19.09.2011). In this statement, the company declares its vision to not only operate in Kemi but also in the surrounding areas of Sea Lapland. The mission of Kemi Tourism Ltd. is to raise awareness of the area, both nationally and internationally, by working closely with entrepreneurs from Lapland and the Bothnian Arc. Secondly, the main idea is to produce and develop tourism and restaurant services. (Kemi Tourism, PowerPoint –presentation, 19.09.2011.)

2 MARKETING

2.1 Definition of Marketing

“Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others” (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 1996, 23).

Marketing is about understanding the customer. The main goal of marketing is to attract and deliver value to new and already existing customers in order to guarantee satisfaction. (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 28.) In other words, marketing is about dealing with customers in a profitable way. It is not an understatement to say that marketing plays a crucial role in any company’s success as every organization, no matter the size or location, uses marketing. Over times marketing has evolved from production and selling oriented marketing to consumer driven marketing that regards the wants of the consumers as the drivers for the marketing strategy (Lahtinen & Isoviita 2001, 13). Nowadays marketing is all around you; on TV, magazines and mailbox. Furthermore, in today’s world with the new approaches, such digital marketing and social media marketing, the message is delivered to you more directly and more personally (Kotler & Armstrong 2010, 29). It is clear that with the new kind of approach, the marketers aim to become part of our daily lives and we, as the consumers, have allowed them to. It should not be seen as a negative thing as it is not as interrupting anymore due to the ability to personalize the marketing to appeal to each individual.

The core concepts of marketing are used to describe the different elements that affect marketing. Armstrong & Kotler (2007, 6-8) define the core marketing concepts as follows.

1. Needs, wants and demands
2. Products
3. Value and satisfaction
4. Exchange, transactions and relationships
5. Market

It is important to understand the basis for which the marketing decisions are made upon. The marketer addresses the customers unfulfilled needs and wants by offering a product that has value and provides satisfaction for the customers (Armstrong & Kotler 2010, 6). Kalb (2004, 6) describes this approach in marketing as market- or customer-driven where the contradiction to this style is product-driven in which your company has a unique product with little competition in the market and can dictate what it offers without paying attention to the needs and wants of the customer. All in all, the goal for marketing is exchange and transaction where a transaction takes place and two parties trade something valued by the other. The concept of relationships in marketing is not only about attracting new customers but also about retaining existing customer relationships. The fifth element, market, consists of the actual and potential buyers of a product. (Armstrong & Kotler 2010, 8.) In digital marketing, the core concepts do not change regardless the non-physical market place of online marketing. As this thesis concentrates on social media marketing, it can also be stated that the market can be easily defined in social media marketing to the individual social media channel. Consequently, the relationship building is also emphasized in social media marketing due to communicative nature of social media.

2.2 Marketing Mix

The marketing mix consists of product, place, price and promotion, and it is often referred as the 4 P's (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel 2009, 45). These elements are used to describe the choices a company makes when marketing a product or a service. They help to discover the actions one needs to take in regards of positioning the product in the market.

Usually, the product is the starting point of the marketing mix. The product includes not only the physical unit of the actual product but also packaging, warranty, after-sale service, company image, brand name and value. (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel 2009, 45.) As this thesis examines the practices of a tourism company, it should be noted that the product can also be a service where the different levels differ from those of a product. The case company's product layers are further discussed in chapter five. The place, also known as distribution strategies, is about making your product easily accessible for the customers (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel 2009, 45). Basically it means placing your product in the most convenient way for the customer in the designated place of purchase and it also emphasizes

the strategies concerning the storage and transporting of the goods. For example in the case of Kemi Tourism Ltd, the services offered are all well-located right by the highway 4 that passes through the whole country. The price defines the value of the product or service to the customer. Consequently, the price is the element that changes the most as it is tied to the market conditions (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel 2009, 45). When making pricing decision, one should consider the competitors as well as the benefits gained from various pricing options such as decreasing the price to obtain more market share or discounts for specific market segments (Mind Tools 2011, date of retrieval 3.11.2011). Advertising, public relations, sales promotion and personal selling are all part of the promotion tools that are used to inform, educate, persuade and remind the customer of the benefits of your product and organization (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel 2009, 45). These marketing communications tools should be synchronized into an integrated marketing communications system and used in absolute harmony to convey the wanted message to the target market. The different decisions in the promotion phase of the marketing mix revolve around subjects such as what is the best channel or method to promote your business to reach your audience, when is the appropriate time and what is it that your competitors do (Mind Tools 2011, date of retrieval 3.11.2011). The purpose of this thesis is to concentrate on future possibilities in social media marketing for the commissioner company and examine the effects of such actions for them.

2.3 Integrated Marketing Communications

In most companies, the marketing is handled by a mix of various communication tools which is then referred as the communications mix. The main goal for any marketing communications, as suggested by Shimp (2010, 50), is to influence behavior in a way that profits the company. These communication tools differ from each other and all of them need individual attention, but in order for these elements to succeed and profit your company, one needs to understand the importance of integration. Shimp (2010, 3) describes integrated marketing communications (used as IMC) as a system where all the different parts of your marketing communications run together efficiently and produce more positive results than if ran separately. In other words, it is a system where all the different tools support each other and paint a synchronized picture of the organization or product.

The philosophy behind IMC is that all the tools speak with one voice – meaning your main strategic message stays the same no matter which tool is used as Shimp (2010, 16) describes it. Arens, Weigold & Arens (2011, 595) continue stressing the point that the communication has to come united and seamlessly from every part of the organization to ensure the manifesting of the principal objective of IMC – earning a good reputation. It is true that the message, even though the content of the message does not change, is received differently depending on which medium is used to deliver the message. According to Armstrong & Kotler (2007, 366) the main idea behind the concept of IMC is delivering a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organization and its brands. Thus, it is very important to understand this in the interest of preserving a strong unified brand image. No one wants to have duplicate or much worse, contradictory messages that diminish your marketing communications. To which Arens et al. (2011, 595) provide an excellent point by stating that with advertising you can create an image but a good reputation can only be earned by being consistent and trust-worthy. All in all, IMC provides you the tools, and thus, the ability to manage your communications effectively to allow the building of a reputable brand.

There are a lot of marketing communication tools for various purposes but the main six tools used are advertising, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling, direct marketing and sponsorship. These tools will be further explained and discussed in the paragraphs below.

Advertising, in general, is about raising awareness, educating, informing and persuading. The trick is to choose the right medium for your advertising – traditionally divided between broadcast and non-broadcast mediums. (Richardson, Gosnay & Carroll 2010, 58.) But with today's technology and digital media, the range of medias to choose from has grown tremendously. Armstrong & Kotler (2007, 368) argue that traditional advertising lacks the ability to be personalized and relies largely on one-way-communication with the audience. Digital advertising does not have to be like that and due to the nature of e.g. social media, the communication is two sided. Digital media has also cut the costs of traditional marketing to a fraction and allowed the marketing to be much more targeted. Advertising in social media is complex as it can be done externally by for example your customers becoming ambassadors of your product in their blogs (also without even realizing it) or internally by for example you planting advertisements on social media networks. (Richardson et al. 2010, 58.) Nowadays the bloggers use their popularity and followers by endorsing a certain brand or a product

and the companies are using them as well by giving them free samples to promote and carry out competitions on their blogs. This can be seen as the digital era equivalent of word-of-mouth marketing and is very valuable source for your organization.

Public Relations (abbreviated as PR) differ radically from advertising with generally being more subtle and softer of a communication tool. It is used for building relationships, generating and fostering goodwill and trust, creating positive stories and conversations, developing a long-term positive reputation for the brand and organization and countering bad publicity. Activities in PR are such as press releases, press conferences, media relations, events and search engine marketing. (Richardson et al. 2010, 60-61.) PR can be used to counter negative attention and also for internal communication. Digital revolution has also affected PR as it has become one of the most commonly used marketing tools in social media. However, the offline created PR buzz is often transformed into online buzz by bloggers which states the importance of engaging in two way conversation with them. You can maximize the impact of your PR campaign by studying who is saying what. Tracking the links between social media releases and customers' interaction with your website et cetera can help you influence the conversation as controlling is not an option with social media. (Richardson et al. 2010, 60-61.) As PR focuses on managing the conversation between the organization and the public, the feedback gained from it should be used to benefit the company. It is a good way to discover what it is that pleases your customers and what it is that does not. This information could prove to be crucial for the organization's success.

Sales promotion is referred to as a 'behavioral' tool as it is designed to affect the behavior of customers. It can be used to increase sales in the short term, encourage brand switching, encourage trading up, trial and use, increase frequency and amount purchased and balance seasonality if experienced. The activity, or technique, used should always match the goal you want to achieve. Examples of these activities include competitions, free prize draws, trial-sized products, money-off coupons, loyalty cards and bulk buying. Sales promotion online can come in many forms such as social media networks designed for coupons or e-coupons that can be redeemed online or printed and used offline. This presents an easy and cheap way to boost up the sales in short-term. It is essential, for measuring the effectiveness of such campaigns, to include a code and also it is wise to remember to add a time stamp or a use-by limit to your coupons. (Richardson et al. 2010, 64-65.)

The goal for sales promotion is to increase sales and usage or trial of a product but on the other hand, these techniques are often creative and depend vastly on the nature of the business. Therefore, there is no such a thing called the one and only way to do sales promotion.

Personal selling is a direct form of communication, commonly one-to-one and face-to-face. It is a good tool to communicate personally with your customers, suppliers and distributors. With personal selling and direct contact with the recipients of your message, you have more control over how it is delivered and thus, received. (Richardson et al. 2010, 65.) An efficient salesperson, according to Armstrong & Kotler (2007, 368), understands where the customer is coming from and states his or her needs in order to create and maintain a long lasting relationship. It is a great tool for the marketers to get more involvement out of the customer, compared to e.g. traditional advertising, but it also requires commitment by the sales force and is rather expensive as a promotion tool. Personal selling has not seen much of a transformation online, compared to other parts of communications mix, but this is likely to change with the growing adaptation rate of video conferencing technology and smart phones by sales people (Richardson et al. 2010, 66).

For **direct marketing**, data base technology is essential for its effectiveness. By keeping your customer data organized and up-to-date you will be better able to take advantage of this online interactive communication tool. In the most traditional sense, direct marketing was all about direct mail but in today's world online methods of direct marketing include direct response advertising, sales promotion (e-coupons), public relations (blogs and podcasts), e-mail, viral marketing, SMS marketing. (Richardson et al. 2010, 65-66.)

Sponsorship is very good for creating brand awareness and building your brand. It is not a very common phenomena in social media; although, it is also expected to grow in the future. Brand awareness creation can be achieved by e.g. associating your brand with a social networking site by sponsoring the site online. (Richardson et al. 2010, 69.)

Now that the different marketing communications tools have been explained separately, the integrated marketing communications concept is easier to understand by having a clearer picture of the various elements it consists of. Undoubtedly there is a need for an integrated marketing

communications plan to ensure that all these different parts work together. This is achieved by following guidelines and rules set by the organization that coordinate the efforts and reinforce each other. Armstrong & Kotler (2007, 366) state that too often companies are too shortsighted with their need for immediate brand awareness rather than focusing on building long lasting customer relationships by being consistent and coordinated in their marketing communication efforts. It is not only about reaching your customers anymore but also helping them to reach you. And in today's world, what better way for customers to reach you than on the Internet and especially, in social media. Digital marketing and social media do not differ as marketing channels – meaning it is still essential to choose the right tools for the different purposes (Richardson et al. 2010, 57). And the marketing communications online should be subjected to the same guidelines and rules as traditional marketing communications as far as your organization's IMC plan is concerned.

2.4 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing, also known as online marketing and e-marketing, is the process of communicating, promotion and selling products and services on the Internet (Armstrong & Kotler 2007, 438). All the processes of digital marketing are applicable to the same principles of those in the traditional marketing and digital marketing as part of the marketing communications should be tied to the integrated marketing communications plan of the organization. It has global reach, low costs, and it is easy to personalize the marketing in digital marketing. Hence, digital marketing has become more and more popular and often mark one of the most important parts of the organization's marketing strategy. Nowadays it is an exception, rather than the rule, to discover that a company does not have any kind of online presence and with the rise of social media, even the smaller businesses with fewer resources, can market themselves online and on social media channels. Besides a social media presence does not require any website building or maintaining expertise from the organization; thus for example a Facebook page is cheaper than a website and far easier to operate for smaller organizations with fewer resources.

As with all forms of marketing, the target for any action is profit creation through customers by either attracting new customers or strengthening the relationship with the already existing customers or about brand by reinforcement or enhancing loyalty. Digital marketing and the Internet as the platform

can be used to achieve this with the value of digital marketing coming from its benefits – cost efficiency and allowing you to communicate with your customers (Richardson et al. 2010, 3). Due to this thesis' concentration on social media, it should be noted that social media, being one medium of digital marketing, provides just that – an ability to interact with your audience in a very cost efficient way.

Marketing in general looks at the customers and the market based on different segments. Consequently, the Internet provides a marketplace where the limitation is Internet access and the market is global by nature. But digital marketing is also about finding your customer – the target for your marketing. Moreover, it is about figuring what it is they want and need. In all, digital marketing is based on traditional marketing but has more abilities in terms of communication and interaction with the two parties involved – the company and its audience.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA

3.1 What Is Social Media?

Most people know what social media is, or at least think they should know, but still find it difficult to define the term in a simple way. And with half-knowledge and lack of confidence comes fear and uncertainty that people often attach to the things they do not understand. (Safko & Brake 2009, 6.) Therefore, it is important to understand what social media is, especially if it is to be used for business purposes.

With a new and complex social media ecosystem, Safko & Brake (2009, 6) argue that there is still a lot to learn about its functions and even more so for its functions in the business world. To understand what social media is, one needs to go back to the foundation of social media and its main idea. Social media, according to Safko & Brake (2009, 6), is explained as people gathering online to communicate and consists of the practices, activities and behaviors related to it. Richardson et al. (2008, 24) state that it can be argued that even the increased interest in preserving the environment has affected the way we communicate by people favoring the less waste producing digital communication, which in turn helped the rise of social media as a platform for communication. But back to the explaining of social media where the communication, as explained by Safko & Brake (2009, 6) takes place on Web-based applications and communities that make sharing possible in form of words, pictures, videos and audios. Hence, the social media ecosystem is very colorful and each social media channel has something the others do not. This might make social media seem like a difficult subject to tackle for some and especially if it is to be used for business where there is less room for experimenting due to the financial risks. However, it should be emphasized that social media should not be viewed as a new and revolutionary phenomenon to the world of human interaction but rather as an improved version of communication. People have communicated via writing, pictures and videos for years and years and social media just provides an online medium to continue this trade. Safko & Brake (2009, 6) even argue that it is likely for one to have participated in social media without acknowledging it by e.g. reading a blog, messaging another member of a community or watching a YouTube video.

Traditional media and traditional marketing have long used the tools social media is founded upon; text, audio, video and photographs. In social media anyone can create and distribute content for free available for millions of people (Zarella 2010, 3). With this kind of a reach, the possibilities of social media are endless. Consequently, Safko & Brake (2009, 5) explain that the difference with social media is that basically everyone with an Internet access has the ability to influence by e.g. becoming a citizen journalist by witnessing and capturing a crime on their camera phone, marketing a product by recommending it to others or sharing a story with mentions of companies or products. Richardson et al (2008, 82-83) predict that citizen journalism, which they compare to blogging, is expected to grow tremendously as people lean more and more towards the online sources for news and magazines.

Social media is about enabling conversation between people online and looking from a business perspective, this takes a little different meaning by also emphasizing the ways the conversation can be prompted, promoted and monetized (Safko & Brake 2009, 4). In the new world of social media and with the rapidly growing sum of different social media channels, it is almost impossible to not have people talk about your company or product. On that account, there is a need for social media understanding in every business in the modern world.

3.2 Social Media for Business

Social media can be used to create business – a new kind of business. There is a chance you will have a niche somewhere in the social media ecosystem. On the other hand, there is no guarantee of success but the other alternative of waiting and seeing if social media is just one of those short-lived fads that come and go every now and then, is not very lucrative either. So even if you have not been involving yourself with social media before, you are not too late. (Safko & Brake 2009, 13.) As history has proven many times before, the early bird catches the worm but also that the people following the first wave of experimenters have been successful by having a good strategy and tactical alternations based upon the experiences by the first-wavers.

Evans & McKee (2010, 189) state that the starting point for social media is often marketing but argue that the meaning of social media for businesses carries far beyond marketing. It consists of functions

that are more suitable for other departments or personnel outside the marketing department with understanding of various subjects such as customer support, legal and retail. Thus, as your social media presence deepens and ages, you want to have a cross-functional team with representatives of all primary departments present in your social media (Evans & McKee 2010, 190).

For businesses social media brings a new dimension to word-of-mouth marketing. If you have a service or a product people seem to enjoy and support, there is no better way to market your services than by word-of-mouth. It is not about controlling what is said about your company, as this is not really even possible with social media, but rather about influencing the conversation. (Safko & Brake 2009, 5.) With a good social media strategy and a little research into the social media fundamentals, your company will be able to take full advantage of social media. The fundament for all successful relationships with the customers, employees, vendors and friends is influence and in social media influencing the conversation is the goal.

Safko & Brake (2009, 5) list three rules to social media usage for businesses that will help you form a clearer picture of social media and what its meaning is for your business: firstly, social media is about enabling conversation; secondly, it is not about controlling the conversations and as the third rule states the basis for all business relationships with economical viability is influence. As long as these three rules are accepted and followed, social media can be harnessed successfully as a marketing tool.

3.3 Types of Social Media

In this part the different types of social media channels are presented. Social media can be divided into different types of platforms that all have distinguishable features. These categories and the way the various social media platforms are categorized, alternate depending on who you ask. According to Universal McCann (2008) the key social platforms are:



FIGURE 1. Key social platforms (Universal McCann 2008, date of retrieval 18.10.2011)

One of the key platforms is social networks that can be classified as websites or applications where people gather together and be social. The social networking sites aim to bring people together and offer a place where conversation can take place between people with no space and time limitations (Safko & Brake 2009, 449). Social networks are based on human interaction taking the conversation online. In social networks, people connect with their peers, transfer and obtain information and help each other (Business Dictionary.com 2011, date of retrieval 18.10.2011). Popular examples of social networks are Facebook and MySpace.

Blogging is described as posting content on a blog (an online journal) or posting comments on someone else's blog (About.com, date of retrieval 18.10.2011). Blogger.com and Tumblr are among the well-known blogging web sites. Microblogging on the other hand means posting small pieces of digital content, e.g. text, pictures or short videos on the Internet. A good example of a microblog is Twitter. Microblogs can also be integrated to a website via widgets. Furthermore, these widgets can be used to display e.g. your Twitter messages alongside other material on your website or blog.

Video and photo sharing follow the same principle of a user uploading videos or photos online to share with others for viewing and commenting (Interactive Insight Group 2011, date of retrieval 18.10.2011). The biggest online video sharing website at the moment is YouTube (Singh 2010, 121). In addition there are various other sites such as Vimeo and Google video. Flickr, Photobucket and

Picasa are examples of popular photo sharing websites (TopTenReviews 2011, date of retrieval 15.10.2011).

RSS and podcasts are both subscription-based services where the user signs up for a feed (i.e. the content) (Webopedia 2011, date of retrieval 18.10.2011). Podcasts are pre-recorded audio or video broadcasts shared by individuals or organizations who want to share their content with others. The user can download the podcasts through services such as Apple's iTunes to their own personal devices (TechTerms.com 2007, date of retrieval 18.10.2011).

Message boards, also known as discussion forums, are online communities where users can post and read about topics of common interest. Chat rooms, on the other hand, are real-time conversations that allow the users to communicate more interactively (SearchSOA.com, date of retrieval 18.10.2011).

3.3.1 Facebook

Facebook is the world's largest social network that connects you with the people you know and care about (Pearlman & Abram 2010, 1). It is a social utility that helps you communicate with your friends, family and coworkers (Mashable 2011a, day of retrieval 23.9.2011). Facebook is free and open to everyone from students to professionals, teens to grandparents and ordinary people to celebrities although it was initially designed exclusively for Harvard students in the United States (Pearlman & Abram 2010, 1; CrunchBase 2011, date of retrieval 3.10.2011). According to Vander Veer (2010, 1) Facebook combines the best of blogs, online forums and groups, photo sharing, and much more. The diversity of Facebook provides business various opportunities and the popularity of the service makes it one of the most important social media tools for marketing purposes. The different ways of using Facebook, as well as the other channels, in marketing are further discussed in the next chapter.

Facebook was founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. The company develops technologies that facilitate the sharing of information through the digital mapping of people's real-world social connections (Mashable 2011a, date of retrieval 23.9.2011).

3.3.2 Twitter

Twitter offers a new way to share ideas and information by allowing people to keep in touch with each other as well as follow businesses and organizations that you are interested in (Fitton, Gruen & Poston 2010, 9). A San Francisco based start-up company Obvious Corp founded Twitter in March 2006 (Mashable 2011b, date of retrieval 25.9.2011). It is a free social networking and micro-blogging service that allows users to send tweets, text-based posts up to 140 characters in length via SMS, instant messaging, e-mail, to the Twitter website, or an application such as Twitterrific (one of the many applications created for the use of Twitter). On twitter you can choose who you want to “follow”, meaning whose messages you want to see. A hashtag (#) is a term that is used in Twitter to help people categorize messages. The ten trending topics that appear on the home page show you what people find important at any moment. (O’Reilly & Milstein 2009, 3.)

Twitter can also be used by businesses as it connects them to customers in real-time. Companies can use Twitter to quickly share information with people interested in their products and services, get real-time market intelligence and feedback, and build relationships with customers, partners and influential people. (Twitter 2011a, date of retrieval 3.10.2011.) According to O’Reilly & Milstein people use Twitter to talk about what they’re reading, watching, listening to and thinking about and they further describe Twitter as the world’s real-time newspaper due to the information on Twitter being shared in a blink of an eye. On Twitter you can see how other people feel about e.g. your company (2009, 9-17). For example Kemi Tourism can see if their attractions are discussed on Twitter and see how people feel about their services. Hence, O’Reilly & Milstein portray Twitter as a key business channel where companies are monitoring what people think of their products, responding to customer service requests, having conversations with stakeholders and making money through creative promotions of various kinds (2009, 9-17).

3.3.3 YouTube

YouTube is an online video-sharing website that allows people to upload and share video clips on www.YouTube.com and across the Internet through websites, mobile devices, blogs, and email. (Mashable 2011c, date of retrieval 3.10.2011). YouTube has approximately 81 million people visiting

each month and more than 150,000 video clips are uploaded every day. First video was uploaded to YouTube in April 2005 (YouTube 2011a, date of retrieval 3.10.2011). YouTube is the number one website for online videos. (Singh 2010, 121.)

YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the world and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers (YouTube 2011a, date of retrieval 3.10.2011). It is accessible to almost every computer with an Internet connection. Millions of people, from experienced Hollywood filmmakers to 16 year olds who just received their first webcams can post their work in the same place, with the same tools available to both from the same website. (Lastufka & Dean 2008, 1.) YouTube was founded in 2005 in San Mateo, California by three former PayPal employees and acquired by Google Inc. in October 2006 (Jarboe 2009, 7; YouTube 2011a, date of retrieval 3.10.2011). YouTube is nowadays a very powerful marketing tool, mainly due to its popularity, and there are various paid advertising options offered for businesses to enhance their marketing efforts.

3.3.4 Flickr

Flickr is a photo (and video) sharing network that allows users to upload, share, tag and comment photographs. In addition to these, Flickr wants to offer its users a way to store and organize their photos. It was created by Ludicorp in 2004 and bought by Yahoo! in 2005. Yahoo! reports the number of registered users to be 51 million. Thousands of photos are uploaded into the service every minute making the total number of uploads to be around 4.5 million per day. (Yahoo! Advertising Solutions 2011, date of retrieval 18.10.2011.) Flickr has a large amount of non-registered visitors but in order to upload and comment an account has to be created.

3.3.5 TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor® is the world's largest travel site and the company states its mission as enabling travelers to plan and have the perfect trip. TripAdvisor offers advice from real travelers and a wide variety of travel choices and planning features (including Flights search, TripAdvisor Mobile and TripAdvisor Trip Friends) with links to booking tools. TripAdvisor-branded sites alone make up the

most popular and largest travel community in the world, with more than 50 million unique monthly visitors and 20 million members. It features more than 50 million travel reviews and opinions from real travelers around the world, over one million businesses, over 93,000 destinations, over 520,000 hotels, over 155,000 attractions, over 715,000 restaurants and more than 8,000,000 candid traveler photos. (TripAdvisor 2011, date of retrieval 9.12.2011.)

A company can create a free business account that makes it possible to update business details and upload photos, receive e-mail notifications of reviews, respond to guest reviews and also promote the business with free widgets and badges. For more advanced business solutions, TripAdvisor offers tourism organizations a chance to upgrade into “a business listing” for a fee that allows creating of special offers, direct contacting and increasing of visibility on the TripAdvisor site. (TripAdvisor for Business, date of retrieval 9.12.2011.)

4 MARKETING IN SOCIAL MEDIA

”Traditional marketing is about having a monologue with your customers and prospects. Social media, on the other hand, is about having a dialogue. When you have a dialogue with a customer or a prospect, the conversation is much more fulfilling (and much more profitable)” (Turner & Shah 2011, 13.)

Social media usage in business usually starts with the marketing department as a way to increase awareness of the business in the market. Marketing in social media is often handled similarly as the traditional marketing rather than viewing it as an innovative and creative way of reaching customers. Consequently, many social media campaigns are run without understanding the innovative nature of social media and the meaning of engagement of the audience. (Evans & McKee 2010, 4.) It is no surprise that businesses regard social media as something new and a bit unsettling due to technical side of the Internet but it should not be viewed as a radical game changer to the world of marketing. The unfamiliarity with the phenomena has been the main reason for this thesis’ commissioner company not participating in social media and probably for a lot of other companies as well. Even according to Evans & McKee (2010, 189) leading the change in adopting social media is the most challenging task in the implementing of a social media strategy. Hence, the criticalness of getting the whole organization involved in the process.

There are also other misconceptions about social media as it is often misunderstood and perceived as a free marketing tool but as in any investment to be handled successfully, social media, is not any different – it requires effort (Turner & Shah 2011, 61). Whether this effort comes in the form of employees, money or simply time, it is still essential to handle social media marketing as any other form of marketing in terms of effort and investment in the process. Even though uploading a YouTube video is free, somebody from your company still has to do the work and that generates costs. Thus, it is important that the company has the resources to run an effective social media campaign. It is not in anyone’s interest to just dabble in social media with insufficient effort. Consequently, a good social media campaign, as described by Turner & Shah (2011, 96), reaches its potential by crossing various platforms, and requires time and money in order to succeed. By crossing various platforms with your

social media campaign, the organization is more able to take advantage of the fact that the audience, as suggested by Safko & Brake (2009, 6), are also more likely to have profiles and presence in more than one media at a time. Moreover, you are more likely to get noticed and thus, achieve your goals, if you are spreading your campaign to multiple social media channels.

4.1 Social Media Strategy

A strategy in general is defined as a plan to differentiate the organization from its competitors by having competitive advantage. The organization needs to know what it is they do, what they want to achieve and how they plan to achieve it. (Harvard Business School Press 2005, 14.) Social media strategy is part of the organization's overall marketing strategy. It is basically like any other marketing strategy as the organization must decide upon two main things; what is our target market (customers) and what is the best way to serve them (value proposition)? The target market is chosen by dividing the market into segments (market segments) and then picking out the best segments to target (target marketing). The value proposition is about the values the organization promises for the customer to satisfy their needs (Armstrong & Kotler 2007, 9.) These values are what differentiate your brand from the others. Consequently, with a strong value proposition you have competitive advantage in your target market (Armstrong & Kotler 2007, 9). All in all, having competitive advantage is the aim of any strategic plan in marketing and by communicating it to your customers is the way to success.

Developing a social media strategy for your business starts with analyzing your organization and the business environment. It is critical for the success of your social media strategy. The first step is to assess your organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the context of social media by using the SWOT analysis (Safko & Brake 2009, 670). Acknowledging the key internal and external issues for your organization, help you in planning and forming of your strategic objectives. It is beneficial to examine your organization as a whole and in terms of social media, as this will allow you to view the bigger picture and not only a small part of the situation. The SWOT analysis is a good start for your situational analysis but it is important to also understand and analyze your customers, competitors and business environment. After the situational analysis has been conducted, the organization should set the strategic objectives and actions, which need to be taken in order to achieve the goals and objectives (Armstrong & Kotler 2007, 55).

As you design the communications in social media strategy, you select the right channels for your communications (Kotler & Keller 2006, 544-548). One should remember that the customer normally uses more than one social media. Thus, it makes sense for your organization to also market on various social media platforms. This does not mean you have to be present on every social media there is nor should the effort put into marketing be the same for all the medias (Singh 2010, 106). For a successful marketing strategy, the organization should be aware of the main social media channels their customers use to be able to concentrate their marketing efforts. There are no single criteria for the choosing of the social media to market in but the main idea is to find the ones where your customers spend most of their time on. For example a tourism company such as Kemi Tourism Ltd should implement TripAdvisor to the social media operations as it is a popular social media site specified for travelers and it is used for reading reviews of tourist destinations. Overall, a strategy has little importance if it is not implemented successfully, thus, the organization needs to spend more time on the implementing part of the strategy and remember that it does not necessarily have to be perfect on the first go as you are likely to improve it along the way. Hence, it is essential to measure the effectiveness of your strategy and actions and the ways of measuring social media marketing are further discussed below.

4.2 Four Steps to Social Media Marketing Strategy

There are many theories to explain social media marketing that all address the different characteristics of the phenomena. There is, for example, a theory by Gaurav Mishra about “The 4C’s to Social Media Framework” and a theory by Sean Nelson about “The 4 C’s of Social Media”. But in this case, the four pillars theory of social media strategy by Lon Safko and David K. Brake, is used to describe the concepts behind social media marketing and how the concepts should be utilized in the organization’s social media strategy. Safko & Brake (2009, 675) characterize the platform to a social media marketing strategy by using four pillars. In order for a social media marketing strategy to be efficient and successful, you need:

1. Communication,
2. Collaboration,
3. Education,
4. Entertainment.

Social media is about communication and enabling conversation which leads to the question every social media marketing strategy should start with. What do you want them to talk about? It is, undeniably, things that increase and generate profit for your company. This can be achieved internally by e.g. enabling your employees to share knowledge and offer ideas or externally by e.g. enabling your customers to promote your product's benefits to their peers. (Safko & Brake 2009, 675.) Also according to Evans & McKee (2010, 191) in social media, the external and internal dynamics can function more productively based on sharing information and for organizations that include product development as part of their marketing, social media can be used to provide innovative solutions by listening to your audience and evolving your product.

The first pillar, communication, relies on social media being all about engaging your audience. Furthermore, as every company already communicates with their audience somehow, you need to look at what you are already doing and the results you are getting as well as reflect on what could be missing in order for your strategy to be efficient. In contrast to the traditional means of communication, Safko & Brake (2007, 675) explain that with social media, you are able to measure the communication you are using by e.g. having coupons in your monthly newsletters or measuring traffic on your YouTube channel or blog. These all generate a cause-and-effect relationship that will allow you to follow on how successful your approach has been where as in traditional marketing communications you mainly rely on your instincts of what works and what does not. Measuring the organization's marketing efforts will be further discussed in the last section of this chapter. One of the most important aspects, as stated by Safko & Brake (2009, 676), is that with social media you can get feedback immediately to your message as your audience is able to comment on it. Agreeably, this is what makes social media a very unique and beneficial tool for business usage. With the communication social media enables, the organization will understand its customers better, which can then be used to its advantage.

The second pillar, collaboration, can also be divided into internal and external collaboration. Internal collaboration in social media strategy means the tools used to enhance the collaboration of your employees. An example for a tool like this is a company Wiki (a social media tool that allows you to collaboratively create and edit content) that leverages the collective wisdom of your employees for the benefit of your organization. (Safko & Brake 2009, 677.) Thereupon, the collective wisdom of your

employees should be harvested and used to benefit the organization. Externally, collaboration as presented by Safko & Brake (2009, 677), as a concept can be a bit counterintuitive as you cannot control the things customers say about your company. Kemi Tourism's services are already being discussed about on various social media channels although the company has yet to participate in the conversation. As controlling is not possible Kemi Tourism should seek to influence the tone of the conversation by participating in it. It is wise to consider whether you really achieve anything by running away from this kind of customer collaboration or if it is really more beneficial to sponsor it in some way. For this reason, it might be a good idea to engage the customers through collaboration by e.g. creating a customer advisory community forum that offers their ideas to the company's use as advocated by Safko & Brake (2009, 678). With this method, your customers are one step closer to you and they have been given a feeling of worth, which is always very beneficial when building trust in the relationship. Involving your audience through collaboration, as also acknowledged by Evans & McKee (2010, 191), can happen through multiple practices in social media such as getting your customers to provide ways to improve your product or service offerings or having them vote on different ideas, thus, allowing you to focus on what they want. For Kemi Tourism Ltd social media could act as a platform for valuable feedback. All in all, there are many ways to collaborate so finding a good and efficient way for the organization is the main question here.

Education, as the third pillar, is about leveraging the expertise of the company through its employees but also through its customers (Safko & Brake 2009, 679). Engagement of your audience through education can be achieved through several social media tools and applications. You can educate your audience in a very effective and visual way with social media tools such as YouTube, a social media perfect for educational videos that engage your audience and enhance your brand or with Flickr, a photo sharing network with features such as captions and discussion boards (Safko & Brake 2009, 679). You will be able to show your company in a light that is most lucrative through the control gained from these social media tools and applications. For Kemi Tourism, YouTube and Flickr are great channels to promote the business and present the services through educative videos and pictures that portray the organization in the most appealing light as possible and arouse interest in the possible customers to visit Kemi.

Consequently, entertainment is the fourth pillar for forming your social media strategy. If your company or product has a feature or attribute people find entertaining, this should be harnessed in your social media strategy. Then again, you should not automatically assume entertaining means funny, as humor is not the easiest form of entertainment to execute as it demands caution. (Safko & Brake 2009, 680.) What is funny to some might be offensive to others. Thus, it is much safer to experiment entertaining your audience with delivering interesting or compelling content. This goes for both internal and external communication. An example of a good and safe place to test how your content is perceived is a customer advisory board, as recommended by Safko & Brake (2009, 680).

With these four pillars it is easier to understand how social media strategy is to be structured and what are the aims for one's social media strategy. Moreover, the four pillars help you to develop an effective social media strategy that supports and relies on the most important aspects of social media.

4.3 Ways to Market Your Business in Social Media

In this chapter, the different tactics of marketing in social media are discussed and some comparisons are made between the different tools. As done previously in the thesis, the focus is on the most important social medias for this research; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and TripAdvisor. The purpose is to provide a concrete image of marketing in social media by giving examples of the various tactics.

When thinking about marketing in social media most methods are unpaid but as the social media phenomena has grown and businesses have become more aware of its benefits, there has been an addition of paid marketing tools for most of the medias. Lastly, the paid tactics and tactics unique to individual social media channels are presented. On the other hand, the unpaid methods are the easiest and most convenient way to start marketing in social media and they could be considered as the primary method for the commissioner of this thesis as well. Marketing in these channels are all based on creating a profile for your organization and interacting with your audience.

It all starts with creating a profile page for your organization to connect with new and loyal customers that includes all the basic information about your business. The profile is created for the organization to be able to share content which can be in form of text, picture, audio, video or links to other websites. The content should consist of your products, services and the expertise you have as well as the things you encourage your audience to contribute and the conversations you enable, influence and archive (Safko & Brake 2009, 683). In order for your efforts to gain attention, you need to have an audience – referred as fans, followers or subscribers depending on the social media channel. This means you should promote your profile by at least adding links and specialized buttons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and TripAdvisor onto your website and for example putting the URL to your business cards, in-store signs and flyers. Professional and compelling pictures and videos are a great way to promote your organization by building the brand image and get people excited about your products and business. You want people to comment on them, “like”, retweet and share them. Commenting and sharing is possible on all the five medias this thesis concentrates on. You want the customers to be engaged and more importantly, to contribute their own content. You should also use these social media channels for marketing campaigns, events, sales and specialized deals as they bring the audience closer to the events, generate buzz and allow them to participate in them already before the actual event.

On Facebook, location based services can be used for your marketing advantage as the content you post (e.g. status updates, events and pictures) can include your location so users can find your organization based on it. It is also essential to add the physical address of your business and as Facebook has a feature called “check-in” you can claim the physical place of your business for your employees and customers to check in on Facebook. (Facebook for Business 2011, date of retrieval 8.11.2011.) Twitter also offers location based services that can be added to the tweets and the pictures posted on Twitter. Specifically on Twitter, there is an option to include your tweets to a specified subject by using a hashtag that Twitter refers as “the theme for your tweet”. For a Finnish tourism organization like Kemi Tourism an example for a hashtag could be “#Arctic”, “#Finland” or “#Lapland” that is added to the end of the tweet so that users can find it by searching for similar-themed tweets. Due to the limited character amount of each tweet, the messages posted on your account should be clear and short. Consequently, Twitter is good for news and promoting events for which additional information can be found on another website (Twitter for Business 2011, date of

retrieval 22.11.2011.) YouTube has also included location based services to its catalogue by allowing users to add the location where the video was shot to it so it shows up on a map. But a location is not the most convenient way for your audience to find your video. Hence, you should include an accurate title, description and tags (keyword or label for the theme of the content). This makes your video pop up in the search results. There is an option that puts the featured video of your account on autoplay and an opportunity to create a custom background for your profile. (Social Media Examiner 2011, date of retrieval 22.11.2011). On Flickr it is desirable to participate by joining the appropriate groups (e.g. travel related groups for tourism organizations). One tactic that emphasizes your organization is to use your website address as your Flickr screen name so that it appears every time you do something, such as comment or post pictures. Remember to use tags on YouTube and Flickr as well to describe the videos and photos. (Small Business Search Marketing 2010, date of retrieval 22.11.2011.)

After you have successfully started your social media campaign and established some kind of a presence on these channels, there are some paid marketing tactics you might want to consider. Facebook has banner and social advertisements as well as sponsored stories and gifts. Although, it should be noted that traditional banner advertisements do not work as efficiently as on other websites in social media due to the engaging nature of the content already on the site (Singh 2010, 109). Twitter offers advertising solutions such as promoted tweets, trends and accounts that provide more visibility for your business or product (Twitter for Business 2011, date of retrieval 22.11.2011). On YouTube, you can advertise in various ways through Video Ads, Display Ads and via the Brand Channel. There is also opportunity for custom solutions in advertising. (Youtube 2011c, date of retrieval 22.11.2011.) Flickr offers a variety of paid advertising options such as advertisements on home page and sponsored groups (Yahoo! Advertising Solutions 2011, date of retrieval 18.10.2011). You are able to place your advertisement on different parts of the site. Other advanced tactic is creating a Pro account that entitles you to unlimited uploads and creates authority and respect in the community (Small Business Search Marketing 2010, date of retrieval 22.11.2011).

The most essential thing to remember when marketing in social media is the communicative nature of the phenomena. Consequently, you should treat social media differently as a marketing tool

compared to traditional media. It is a two way street and to get the most out of your social media campaign, you need to engage your audience and get them to participate in any way possible.

4.4 Measuring the efforts

The myth of social media marketing being immeasurable has been hurting the phenomena's reputation in terms of becoming an accepted marketing tool. Furthermore, many marketers and consultants have argued that it is too early to measure it as well as measure the value of a conversation. (Singh 2010, 225.) It might have been the case a couple of years ago but today, however, there are many ways to measure your social media marketing. It is true that there is a lack of standardized measurement but this does not mean it should not be measured at all (Practical Ecommerce 2011, date of retrieval 21.11.2011). Evans & McKee state that the main reason for measuring the organization's social media marketing is that whole the organization (beyond the marketing department) is more capable of comprehending and accepting it. In addition to this, social media marketing has a greater chance to succeed and not be a simple experiment, or a costly diversion, if there is a working measurement program in place. (2010, 140). Moreover, measuring allows the marketers to track what actions are effective in their social media campaigns and what should be changed. This just proves that measuring the organization's marketing effectiveness is applicable to social media marketing as much as it is to traditional marketing.

There are various ways to classify the different measurement tools for social media marketing and as the usage of social media in marketing gains more momentum in the business world, the amount of measurement tools increase as well. Popular tools include Twitter Search, Google Alerts (both for search results) and Google Analytics (reports website traffic). Aside the free options, there are also a lot of paid tools (such as SproutSocial) that are great for bigger organizations with larger social media campaigns. The traditional measurements such as page views, total and unique visitors might not be enough to measure the effectiveness of one's social media marketing. What's more important is to get the audience engaged in your social media campaign, so measuring the activity of your fans' likes, comments, retweets and shares tell you more about the effects. (Practical Ecommerce 2011, date of retrieval 21.11.2011.)

For smaller businesses with presence and marketing efforts only in one or two social media channels, it might be easier to measure the effectiveness by using each channel's own measurement or analytics page. For example, Facebook (Page Insights) provides a lot of important measuring information by listing the number of fans, total comments, likes and even click-through-rate (Facebook Developers 2011, date of retrieval 21.11.2011). The same goes with YouTube with its own Insight –page that offers information on page and video views, demographics, ratings, commenting and, of course, the number of subscribers (YouTube 2011b, date of retrieval 21.11.2011). Twitter has a page for Advertiser Analytics that offers insight into the fundamental metrics of your campaign; retweets, click-throughs, follows as well as timeline activity and followers (Twitter 2011b, date of retrieval 21.11.2011).

To summarize, it is important to find the right metrics for your organization that can be applied to your analytics program. This will make measuring the social media efforts a less challenging task and provide you the information necessary for making your social media strategy and operations a success.

5 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING PLAN

In this part of the thesis, a social media marketing plan is constructed for the case company, Kemi Tourism Ltd. The structure of the social media marketing plan follows Kotler and Armstrong's (2007, 55) contents of a marketing plan and is then applied to social media. The purpose for the social media marketing plan is to give the commissioner an opportunity to see what social media could mean to the company and how social media could be used in the future marketing.

5.1 Situational Analysis

As this is a social media marketing plan, the current marketing efforts of the commissioner company are discussed in this part. The marketing methods are different for the two main products, SnowCastle and Sampo, with the reason for this being the different customer profile of each product. This will be further discussed in the customer analysis.

Currently the company's marketing is handled by a management team but ideas are suggested by all the employees at the office. However, the marketing manager makes the decisions mainly based on her own insights and ideas of what she finds feasible. Due to the small size of the company and the amount of workforce, it is clear that they have limited resources for marketing activities. The company, therefore, relies partly on marketing from external sources having a somewhat passive approach to marketing. One of the main marketing methods, according to the commissioner, is marketing to the distributors who in this case are travel agencies and trip organizers around the world. This is achieved by contacting the agencies regularly and valuing the already established relationships. It should be stated that this generates most of the sales for the company. Another important marketing method for the company is personal selling at trade shows across the world where all the Kemi Tourism's products are marketed together. For SnowCastle the marketing communications usually consist of advertisements on different medias (TV, newspaper, radio, Internet) as well as road- and LED- signs. The marketing increases as the winter approaches due to the seasonality of the services and it is mainly focused on nearby areas (with billboard advertisements et cetera). For international markets and customers, there is no marketing carried out directly by the company but journalists for both printed and TV media contact the company regularly

asking material for their publications. For Sampo, marketing is basically nonexistent as the company does not market or advertise the product at all in Finland and the product itself is not marketed internationally. The approach to marketing Kemi Tourism is more about getting the customer to visit Kemi rather than just visit an attraction located in Kemi. It should be noted that whenever an article is written about e.g. SnowCastle it is very likely that the article also covers other attractions, specifically Sampo, and the Kemi area on the side.

In terms of social media in marketing, the company does not have much of presence in the media and have had little interest in it. The company already has a Facebook page that is very limited and lacks a lot of information. It has not been operated by the company itself which shows in its condition updating wise. They do not have any other social media pages but on the other hand there is a lot of talk, pictures and videos about the attractions on various social media channels already. Consequently, this presents an opportunity for the company to participate in the conversation and leverage it as a part of their marketing efforts. Furthermore, the company already possesses a lot of material, such as promotional videos and pictures taken yearly and some of them are uploaded on to the website. On the company website, there is a photo gallery that the company regards as an important part of their operations as the photos are also widely used (with permission) in the press around the world. These can all be used in social media and of course, having them already available, makes it easier for the commissioner to begin their social media operations.

It is necessary to point out that usually there are destination management companies (abbreviated as DMC) that handle the marketing for all the attractions and tourism related services in a specific area. This allows the visitors to find complete and coherent information about the destination as a whole including all the attractions and activities that the location has to offer. Yet, for Kemi and the Sea Lapland area, there is no DMC based in Sea Lapland to market the region. The company cooperates with the neighboring tourism companies but then again, there are no activities directly linked to marketing in these co operations. Nevertheless, the commissioner feels the marketing has been sufficient in contrast to the financing available but of course, there is always possibility for enhancing the marketing.

5.1.1 Product Analysis

In the tourism industry, the marketer needs to think about the product on four levels; the core product, the facilitating product, supporting product and the augmented product. The basic level, i.e. the core product, states the main benefit to the consumer which the marketers use to sell the product rather than just selling its features. The facilitating product aspects are services and goods that allow the customer to utilize the core product's services. The augmented product includes elements such as consumer participation and interaction with the service organization, accessibility, atmosphere and customers' interaction with each others. (Cooper et al. 2008, 579-580.)

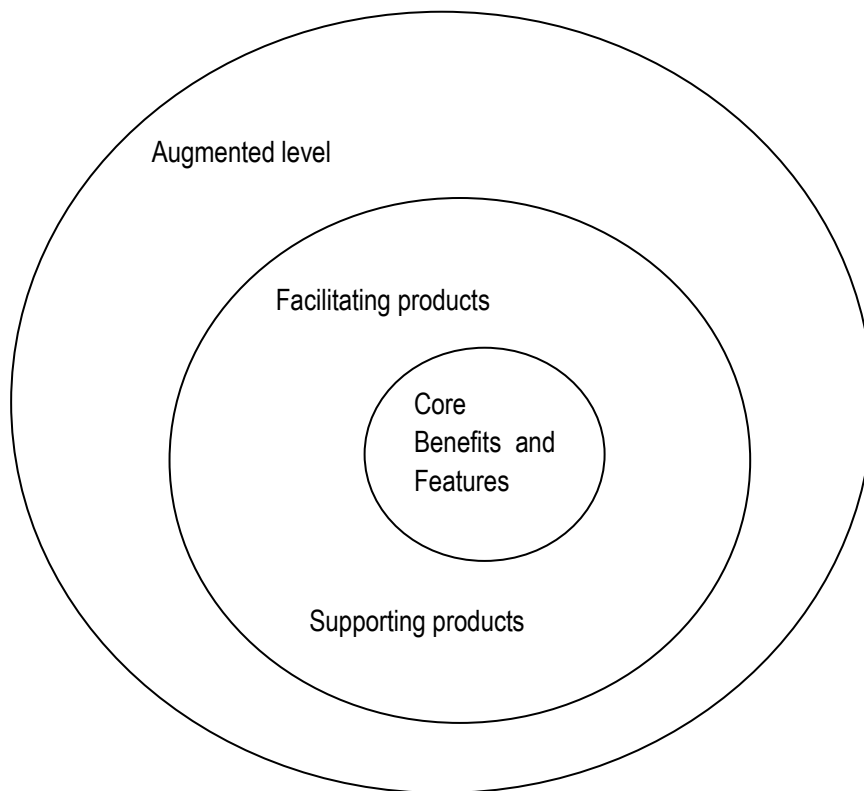


FIGURE 2. Levels of product (Cooper et al. 2008, 579)

As stated previously, Kemi Tourism has two main products, SnowCastle and Icebreaker Sampo. If these products are examined by using the product levels theory, in both of these products the core product shares the same benefit; experience. The customers visit the SnowCastle to experience the winter wonderland and with Sampo the main reason for customers to visit is to experience it as an icebreaking cruise ship. On the next product levels these two attractions are analyzed individually to provide a more comprehensive picture.

SnowCastle's facilitating level includes the physical premises of the castle itself as well as the box office located in the entrance. It also covers the different elements in the premises such as lighting and public restrooms. The restaurant, bar, cafeteria, gift shop, chapel, children's playground and events and exhibitions constitute the supporting level of the product. Sampo Icebreaker's facilitating level consists of the ice breaking vessel, public restrooms and the thermally insulated suits for swimming in the sea as a part of the cruise. The supporting aspects of the product involve restaurant and bar, guided tour, swimming in the sea, a possibility to extend the cruise to a several day activity package (with husky dog safaris and snowmobiles) and a certification of attending the cruise.

The augmented features of the SnowCastle consist of the mystic and arctic atmosphere which can also be applied to Sampo. In addition to this, both SnowCastle and Sampo encourage customer interaction by having staff members present at the attractions and customer participation by involving the customers in various events and having activities such as the tour and swimming for Sampo. Customers interact with each other in both attractions when attending events together. Accessibility, however, differs between the two as the SnowCastle is located in the city center and is easily accessible with parking lots near-by and Sampo having a more remote location of 10km from the city center with no public transportation possibilities.

The marketers are able to make the product more appealing to the customers by complementing the basic product with special benefits in order to gain more value. Furthermore, the added layers of the product act as differentiators in the market. (Cooper et al. 2008, 580.) The core product, in this case being the experience the customer gains from visiting either attraction, is complimented by the facilitating and augmented features of the services. It is important to provide complimentary services, such as the restaurant and bar service, to the core product to make the customer's experience as

pleasant and interesting as possible. Every little detail of the service package can add to the experience, for example having arctic and exotic foods or even having thematic music playing inside the castle to provide the extra oomph to the mystic and arctic atmosphere. The service can be improved and finessed with such elements and this can also help in offering varying services each year as these are easy to change and for example adapt to the current theme of the SnowCastle as done currently by the organization. It is beneficial for the company to analyze their product's layers in order to be able to compete in the market and differentiate their offerings from others. Moreover, understanding and communicating the core benefits of your product, as well as the added services, is essential for successful marketing. The main message to communicate to the customers is the arctic experience for both the SnowCastle and Sampo. This is best achieved by pictures and videos on the company's social media channels that allow the vibe to transfer effectively through. The additional features of the core service should be marketed as well to give a more complete depiction of the service. Conversing the core benefit complimented by the added features to the customer through social media, and other communication channels, is the foundation of all communication done by the company.

5.1.2 Customer Analysis

In terms of the tourism industry, the market for Kemi Tourism is the whole world and of course, in particular, Finland. As explained previously in this thesis, the tourism industry seems to be enjoying growth both in Finland and globally. As a result, the market can be segmented to domestic and international markets. The domestic market is quite saturated making the international market seem like a more appealing option for the source for possible growth. Of course, there is always room for improvement in the domestic market as well but from the international market there is a chance to get more customers in relation to the current customer amount.

According to Kemi Tourism, SnowCastle and Sampo have a differing customer base. But what the visitors have in common is that they seek unique experiences by traveling around the world. The different customer types for SnowCastle can be characterized as a young Finnish family with children travelling to Lapland and the international tourists, specifically for the SnowHotel. For the SnowHotel the visitors, beside the Finnish, e.g. last year were mainly from The Netherlands, Belgium and

Germany. The total number of overnight visitors was about 600. Other typical customer types are the elderly, people from neighboring areas and incentive groups. Last year, the total number of visitors for the SnowCastle was 80 000. For Sampo, the typical customer is a 35-55 year old foreigner. During the 2010-2011 season most of the visitors came from Spain, China and Israel. The total number of visitors for Sampo was about 7000. When considering the matters that affect the geographic profile of customers of both SnowCastle and Sampo, there is no single explanation that addresses the reason why the customers come from specific countries. Consequently, the countries where most visitors come from change yearly. According to the commissioner, the customers can accidentally come across a news story, article or even someone's personal YouTube video that inspires them to visit Kemi.

5.1.3 Competitor Analysis

The competitive environment of Kemi Tourism is very multi-dimensional. The organization competes with other tourist locations in Finland, specifically in the Northern Finland as well other similar destinations around the world. In addition to these, Kemi Tourism also competes with destinations all over the world for the international tourists. The tourism industry is global in nature and the competition can mean destinations that have no similarities other than the fact that they are tourist destinations. Hence, the competition analysis can be conducted in many ways and depends largely on what you want to consider as the competition.

In Finland alone, Kemi Tourism has a lot of competition. Even the city of Helsinki can be considered as competition and one of the main goals for the organization is to get the traveler to come to Northern Finland and Lapland instead of staying in Helsinki. The next phase is to get the traveler to Kemi in which stage Kemi competes with other destinations in Lapland such as Rovaniemi, Levi and Ylläs.

If this analysis is viewed from the attraction perspective, the competitors are other snow castles and icebreakers close to Kemi. In Northern Finland, there is a snow castle in Enontekiö, a snow village in Ylläs and a snow hotel in Rovaniemi. What they all have in common with the SnowCastle of Kemi are hotel, restaurant and chapel services. The Hetta Snowcastle in Enontekiö is open on request (for 40

Euros/the cost of five individual entrance tickets) and is built for the 16th time during the 2011-2012 season. It opens in the beginning of December. (Sonsoma Oy 2011, date of retrieval 22.11.2011.) The snow village in Ylläs is open from the middle of December to the middle of April. The snow village is not a castle per se but rather a constitution of separate snow and ice buildings. This year marks the 10th season for the snow village. (Snow Village 2011, date of retrieval 22.11.2011.) The snow hotel in Rovaniemi, called Arctic SnowHotel, offers activity packages and snow sauna for day and over-night visitors looking for Arctic and Lappish experiences (Arctic SnowHotel 2011, date of retrieval 23.11.2011). In Northern Sweden, there is a snow hotel, ICEHOTEL, in Jukkasjärvi that offers similar services with all the other competitors as well as the SnowCastle of Kemi. The 2011-2012 season is the 22nd time it is being built and has the world famous Absolut Icebar. (ICEHOTEL 2011, date of retrieval 23.11.2011.) Compared to its competitors, the SnowCastle of Kemi has a shorter season due to the more Southern location but the hotel prices are in the lowest range in the bunch. Furthermore, among the strong suits of the SnowCastle in Kemi are the amount of events during the season as well as the yearly changing theme of the castle.

Similar services to the Icebreaker Sampo are offered by an Icebreaker in Piteå, Sweden. It can be considered as direct competition as it also offers cruises on the Bothnian Bay with opportunities to experience icebreaking as well as the possibility to swim in the icy sea. The Arctic Explorer's cruise season (January – March) is shorter to Sampo's season (December – April depending on the ice conditions). Also the Arctic Explorer cruise time is shorter by a couple of hours and there is a restaurant and bar built-in in the Sampo that cannot be found on the Arctic Explorer. The capacity for Arctic Explorer is 80 person maximum whereas for Sampo it is 150. (Pite Havsbud 2007, date of retrieval 24.11.2011; Sampo Icebreaker and SnowCastle –press release, 5.5.2011.) The traveler probably does not choose between the two icebreakers, as the main reasons for visiting mostly have to do with the country and destination that they want to travel to, followed by comparing of the activities offered in that area.

From the differentiation point of view, Kemi Tourism has an advantage over their competitors with the variety of the services (snow castle, snow hotel and the icebreaker). This allows the traveler to get more out of their trip in one location experience wise. Additionally, Kemi is conveniently located and easily accessible with its own airport nearby as well as being located next to highway 4. SnowCastle

hosts a lot of events, especially for children, unique to the company and can set them apart from their competitors. The snow hotel is also one of the cheapest among its competitors and Sampo has a larger capacity for passengers. These are all advantages that can be highlighted in the company's marketing.

As the traveler seeks information on possible tourist destinations and activities, the amount of information available undoubtedly affects the decision making process. For example, the traveler looks up information on snow hotels online and compares the different locations. In this case, the types of services offered impact the final choice and how well the customers' needs can be fulfilled with them. Beside the amount of information available, the quality of the information is important as well. Even the outlook of the company website can be crucial. Consequently, a professional, modern and clear website gives a positive image of the organization. Today, even social media presence can be of importance as well and social media presence might have an effect when deciding on where to visit and where to travel.

5.1.4 PESTE Analysis

The PESTE analysis is a tool for examining the external environment of the company in order to market successfully. The PESTE analysis consists of political, economical, social, technological and environmental components. (Cooper et al. 2008, 556.) The external environment of the commissioner company is analyzed below.

Political factors in the tourism industry consist of elements such as taxation, duty, tourism policies and airport regulations (Cooper et al. 2008, 556). As the organization is located in Finland, which is a member of the European Union, it has to follow the taxation and duty policies set by the Finnish government as well as the EU. The image of Finland as a country as well as a tourist destination also affects Kemi Tourism Ltd. The organization is also very dependent on the city of Kemi in terms of financing and if Kemi was to stop the funding, it would seriously damage the company. The city of Kemi has its own airport which has made Kemi Tourism Ltd more accessible to its customers but if the airport or the airlines that fly to Kemi were to change their routes or decrease them, these could harm the company as well.

Economical factors include elements such as inflation, unemployment, exchange rates and average salaries (Cooper et al. 2008, 556). In this case, the main factors have to do with the world and domestic market conditions. If prices are higher e.g. with transportation, this might lead to fewer tourists to the region and affect the profits of the organization. If the whole world was to go to another recession, it would mean less business for the organization and if the domestic market was doing poorly, this could mean less funding from the city.

Social factors include components such as demographics, cultural differences, language barriers, values, lifestyle and education (Cooper et al. 2008, 556). Global trends affect the business as one trend could be that tourists are interested in exotic attractions or experience tourism which would put more value to the organization's attractions. In today's world people are more and more global minded and interested in travelling.

Technological factors include components such as innovations, new systems and Internet (Cooper et al. 2008, 556). Internet has provided businesses an ability to reach wider audiences and the social media phenomena has brought people and businesses together in a way that no other marketing medium has done before by allowing two way communication between the company and its audience. The organization can benefit from their upcoming online store which makes the company more accessible to the people from all over the world. Thus, social media presence would complement the online store and it could be used for marketing the online store as well.

Environmental factors include global warming, pollution and diminishing natural resources (Cooper et al. 2008, 556). In this case, snow and ice being the most important elements for Kemi Tourism's operations, global warming is a concern. Furthermore, the winter season in general would shorten and temperatures lower which would then affect e.g. the time the SnowCastle is open for visitors or in the worst case scenario, the building of the SnowCastle would not be possible at all in the future. Pollution and diminishing natural resources, e.g. oil, could affect the opinions on flying dramatically but also if the governments start to regulate flying by laws and limitations. Consequently, this would affect the tourism industry as a whole as well as the organization.

5.1.5 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a method used to the evaluation of the company's strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T). It provides the company an analysis of the markets and marketing environment by describing the opportunities and threats. It is also a method to analyze the company's internal factors; its strengths and weaknesses. (Armstrong & Kotler 2007, 54). The SWOT analysis is an important part of situational analysis as it can be viewed as an inventory of the internal strengths and weaknesses and examining the external opportunities and threats that may affect your organization. Figure 3 presents Kemi Tourism's internal and external factors and also shows how they affect the communications side of their operations.

	Positive	Negative
Internal factors	<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uniqueness of attractions • wide variety of services • established presence in the media • customer base • professional material ready for use in marketing communications 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resources • marketing • season dependence • profitability • lack of interest in social media
External factors	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rise in popularity of e-commerce, digital marketing and social media • cooperation with other organizations • growth in the tourism industry • feedback and product development 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • world's economical state • competitors

FIGURE 3. SWOT analysis of Kemi Tourism Ltd

First the internal factors are discussed to map out the company's strengths and weaknesses. The company's strengths revolve around its unique offering in terms of the attractions and services. The company operates a snow castle that is special because of its size and features. In addition, the company has an icebreaker that serves as a cruise ship in the winter time. Together these attractions form a one-of-a-kind experience that according to the commissioner, no other tourist organization in the world offers. One of the company's strengths as a tourism organization is the fact that they have more than one attraction with a wide range of services that come from the SnowCastle and the Sampo Icebreaker as well as other services, such as the Gemstone Gallery. The organization's already established presence in the media can be viewed as one of its strengths. Many media representatives are already familiar with e.g. SnowCastle and contact the company themselves for material for press releases and such. One of the organization's strengths is the worldwide customer base as it constructs from both Finnish and international customers. From the perspective of marketing communications and social media marketing, the commissioner company already possesses a large amount of material that can be used e.g. on Flickr and YouTube for promotional purposes.

The main attractions of the organization operate during the winter time only which means the profit generation is very season dependent. This can be seen as one of its weaknesses and the season dependability of the operations can also be noticed in the work force as the number of employees is increased as the winter season starts. The organization's internal limitations also include the lack of resources and marketing. The lack of resources weaken the company's ability to operate as they do not possess a sufficient amount of finances which then affects the number of permanent workers and their time management. This all affects the company's marketing and the effort that can be put on it. In addition, the lack of interest in using social media for business has already prevented the company from including social media in their activities and could potentially put off it in the future as well. In recent years, the company has struggled with its profitability and weakened the company due to layoffs and downsizing. This might hurt the company in the long term.

The external environment is examined in the opportunities and threats. According to World Tourism Organization (2011) the tourism industry has recently experienced growth which provides an opportunity for the organization to succeed if the trend in the industry is to continue. In today's world,

technology and the Internet have forced businesses to part take in the action as well. Consequently, the soon-to-be-launched online store and the possibilities it brings to the company can be viewed as a great opportunity for growth. In addition to the e-commerce, rise in popularity of social media can be seen as an opportunity to enhance the company's marketing activities. Using social media allows the company to receive feedback on their services and be of assistance in adapting and perfecting their services according to the needs and wants of the customers. One of the opportunities the organization has is the co-operation with other organizations. This can come from other local organizations or co-operation with other tourism organizations. Another opportunity in co-operation is to work with travel agencies all over the world.

The external threats for the company come from the uncertain economic state of the world. The tourism industry has experienced occasional shocks, due to events such as downturns in the economy, but the international tourism has showed almost uninterrupted growth since the 1950s (UNWTO 2011, date of retrieval 17.11.2011). The threat from competitors is not only limited to local or national organizations but also consists of international competitors. Kemi Tourism competes with other exotic tourist locations which do not necessarily share any similarities with the commissioner. The customers may as well choose warm locations over the arctic and remote Lapland destinations.

5.2 Objectives and Issues

For use of social media in the organization's marketing efforts, the overall objective is of course to increase profits and gain more customers, particularly young and international, through implementing the social media marketing plan. As the company has not yet marketed themselves directly in social media, the purpose in the beginning is to experiment social media as a marketing tool and start involving social media regularly in the company's marketing routines. Consequently, the company's size and the amount of employees can limit the functionality of this plan. It is understandable that for the limited resources at hand, there is a need to prioritize and it should be acknowledged that only a certain amount of effort can be assigned to social media marketing.

Specific goals for the organization's social media marketing involve relationship building with their audience, arranging campaigns to increase sales, increase brand awareness through PR, get more

customers and enhance overall visibility. The organization is able to get closer to their audience with presence in social media, which makes them more approachable and accessible to the customers. The goal is to increase sales by running campaigns in social media that allow the organization to measure the effectiveness of said campaigns. Also with the launch of the new online store, social media brings an opportunity for the company to promote it. Furthermore, social media is a great way to raise awareness; for the brand and for visibility on the Internet, specifically in search engines.

Possible issues that may occur involve questions about the resources and practicality of social media. The resources, as previously stated, affect the organization's ability to operate in social media. Time management is an issue that needs to be addressed before taking on social media marketing. However, it is possible to use social media in marketing effectively if the organization is able to spend even ten to fifteen minutes daily on social media activities. In addition to the lack of resources, the organization has showed little interest in social media in the past, which can influence the effectiveness of social media marketing if it is not seen important. As the organization has a complexity to its offerings, two separate attractions, there are practical issues that need to be solved before joining the different social media channels; e.g. the question whether to have separate profiles for the two attractions in each media or if a joined account for Kemi Tourism Ltd is enough. The whole social media campaign should be kept as convenient and simple as possible for it to remain practical and effective. There is also a need to weigh the language options; whether to run your social media bilingually or not. The consequence of writing only in one language on the social media channels alienates the other customer segment – e.g. if the pages are in Finnish, the international customers cannot participate. The best option is to have a bilingual approach, specifically in this case to have the content in Finnish and in English, to reach the maximum potential of the social media.

5.3 Strategy

A social media strategy for Kemi Tourism Ltd concentrates on communication and engaging the audience – meaning the travelers and of course, the intermediates such as media and the travel organizers et cetera. For the social media campaign to be noticed, it is important to inform your customers of the social media operations. There are many ways to market your operations and these methods are further discussed in the action program. It is vital for the effectiveness of your social

media campaign to spread it across multiple channels as your customers are also present on numerous social media channels. This helps the visibility of your social media operations. Furthermore, for the effectiveness and clearness of your campaign, it is essential to have an integrated and unified message that is aligned with the company's overall strategy that the whole company lead by the marketing personnel can exercise in their social media marketing.

In the beginning of the strategy, the customers are segmented to two main segments to provide clarity and allow the social media campaign to be effective. After the segmentation, the organization needs to choose the social media channels that are appropriate to communicating their needs to the target audiences. The channels that should be included into the plan are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and TripAdvisor. Furthermore, as the company operates in the tourism industry and aims to reach international markets with their social media campaign, the need to join TripAdvisor is immense as it is distinctively for the tourism industry. Experienced travelers and adventure seekers are already familiar with TripAdvisor and by joining it the commissioner company is able to reach this segment more rewardingly. As stated previously in the thesis one of the pillars of social media strategy by Safko & Brake is education and TripAdvisor alongside the other social media channels provides an excellent opportunity to do so.

The target audience is segmented based on geographic location, demographic profile and psychographic profile. Next the target audience is segmented into two segments with the main divider being geographic location followed by an assessment on the most important channels to reach them with and what kind of messages (and the intentions behind them) should be used in order to appeal to them.

Geography	International
Age	30-50
Sex	Female
Income	Middle to high
Marital Status	In a relationship or married
Motive	To experience something new

FIGURE 4. Segment 1: International customer

The first segment describes the target customer as a female foreigner from the age of 30 to 50 with an average to high annual income rate. This person is most likely in a relationship or married with the motive behind traveling being experiencing something new. The female is more likely the one in a relationship that has the most impact on the decision making when planning the trips. Now that the segment is profiled, the main goal of the social media campaign for this segment is to increase awareness about Kemi Tourism Ltd and its offerings on an international level and ultimately to get them to travel to Kemi. The strategy to reach this segment includes having the dialogue on social media in English so that the participation is possible from the international customer as well. Next, the right channels for communication are chosen. The social media channel that international travelers use as a travelling information source is TripAdvisor. For specifically communication purposes, Facebook is the best channel to reach the international customer. Additionally, Facebook offers the most ideal way to market through social media. Twitter, as a channel, should be used to keep the already existing customer or the people already aware of the services up to date and connected with the company. Flickr and YouTube, on the other hand, serve as a great platform to attract new customers through pictures and videos, both from the company and more importantly, shared by other visitors. This person can afford to travel to an exotic location and seeks experiences so the main message to deliver through these channels to the international customer has to be the uniqueness of the services and the arctic experience.

Geography	Finland
Age	30-50
Gender	Female
Income	More than 20 000 € /year
Marital Status	In a relationship with children
Motive	Leisure activity

FIGURE 5. Segment 2: Domestic customer

The second segment describes the target customer as a Finnish female of 30 to 50 years of age with an annual income of more than 20 000 € per year. She is in a relationship, most likely with children with the purpose of visiting being a leisure time activity. In a Finnish household, the female is more likely to make the decisions in regards to travelling but if the couple has children, they affect the decision making too. The goal for the social media campaign for this segment is to give more information about the different events and services available to ensure a visit. This can be achieved through Facebook and Twitter. Both of these channels are a great way to keep in touch with the previous visitors and communicate with them. Flickr and YouTube are not necessarily as important to the Finnish customer as they are for the international but they do act as a support to the other social media channels as well as the website as a source for pictures and videos. The main message delivered to the Finnish customer is the leisure time activity for especially families travelling with children. These families can either be families from near-by areas or families travelling to and from Lapland.

For the social media campaign to reach its maximum potential, the different channels should be used in integration. The different social media channels support each other, for example Flickr and YouTube provide additional material to Facebook about the company and its services. If a possible customer stumbles upon a picture of the SnowCastle on Flickr, he or she is able to find the link to the origin of the picture. The idea is to have all the channels connected to each other so that there is as much information available as possible to engage the customer. Another part of the strategy is to stress the importance of getting the audience to contribute for example by sharing, commenting and posting pictures of your services.

When forming the strategy, the social media channels should be understood before applying them into practice. For Kemi Tourism, the strategic aim for Facebook, which could be treated as the most important channel and as some sort of a doorway to the world of social media, is to reach both the Finnish and international travelers. And for Twitter, it should be kept in mind that the target audience is younger, more likely closer to their 30s than 50s, and as the channel has more of a following outside Finland; therefore it is more likely that the reached audience is international as well. YouTube and Flickr can be considered as more passive tools as it is easy to just rely on one-sided communication e.g. uploading videos and pictures. Therefore, using these channels for PR purposes is probably the most convenient option for the commissioner company. This allows building the brand image with professional and compelling videos and pictures. But it should not be forgotten that the users on both of these channels are also uploading material about the company and commenting on them as well as giving out reviews and expressing their opinions. Thus, the users and their uploaded material are an important part of the interaction and form the image of the company on these channels whether the company likes it or not. As it is not possible to control the conversation it is therefore advisable to try to influence the conversation by participating in it.

What all these channels have in common is that it is not only about reaching customers but also about reaching the intermediates such as the media and press and the travel organizers as nowadays they are more and more involved in social media. It is perhaps not the most important part when designing the strategy but for a tourism organization positive publicity generated through social media matters and draws wanted attention to them. It is possible to use social media as a way to attract the media and get them to endorse your organization. As for the travel organizers, social media could act as a communication channel between already established partners and even in the forming of new partnerships.

As a conclusion, after the channels are chosen, the organization needs to do research on them by listening to the conversation; what is said about the company, other similar tourism destinations, interesting subjects and who are the conversationalists. The next step is to join the conversation by posting updates, commenting and answering questions – these actions build relationships automatically. The marketing communications in social media should follow the guidelines of the actual marketing strategy. The commissioner needs to communicate the strengths, such as

uniqueness of the attractions and the core benefit of them, to distinguish it from the competitors. After getting acquainted with social media and its functions, the social media campaigns and different marketing tactics should be applied to the action plan. The implemented strategy and actions should be measured in order to analyze, adapt and improve the marketing. In the future, if the social media operations are redeemed successful and necessary, the company should consider adding paid marketing tactics, specifically on Facebook, to improve their marketing. For example, Facebook allows you to passively market your services to specific customer segments with specific interests. These tactics are more advanced and should be put to use only after getting the ball rolling for the basic social media activities. Furthermore, they are a great way to continue and enhance the social media campaign.

5.4 Action Program

The action program part of the social media marketing plan describes how the strategy will be turned into a functioning implementation plan. The best approach would be to involve as many employees as possible to the social media processes to ensure there is enough resources to run an efficient social media campaign. As stated previously in this thesis, it is not only the marketing personnel who should be present in the social media but rather have the whole company backing the campaign. Also, as an addition to the internal involvement, social media marketing in its most desirable form enables the external environment, i.e. the customers, to contribute to the campaign. For Kemi Tourism harvesting the networks of local residents and community through social media would provide an ideal enhancement if they marketed the company on their behalf by for example promoting the events of the SnowCastle on their own Facebook pages and suggesting their friends to visit the attraction. The aim for the social media campaign is to increase visibility for the organization, which can then be transferred into profits. Social media should be used as a marketing tool to promote the different aspects of the organization such as the activities, events and e.g. the soon to be launched online store.

The first thing the commissioner needs to do is to join and create profiles for Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and TripAdvisor as well as create a separate profile for Sampo on Facebook as they already have one for SnowCastle. The company should create another page under the same account so it will be

easier to manage. Moreover, you can add administrators to the already existing Facebook account if the other employees e.g. already have an account. For the others besides Facebook, the suggested way is to create a profile under the name Kemi Tourism or Kemin Matkailu. It should be noted that with a Facebook account, you are able to register to YouTube, Flickr and TripAdvisor instead of registering a separate user name. Consequently, Twitter allows you to synchronize your tweets with your Facebook account so that the tweets show up on your Facebook Wall. As regards to the language used on the content, such as updates and basic information, English and Finnish should both be used when possible. As stated in the strategy, this will allow the organization to approach the international customer directly and effectively. In Facebook this can be achieved by writing the text first in Finnish and then in English divided by for example a slash or a vertical bar. On the other hand the suggested language for Twitter usage is English as the target audience is international and the character limitation prevents using two languages in one update effectively. However, this does not mean the total exclusion of the Finnish language as it might be useful to still post some updates, retweets or news in Finnish.

Next the commissioner should start raising awareness for their social media operation by adding social media logos (e.g. "Like us on Facebook") and links as well as consider adding plug-ins (small applications that show the latest updates on Facebook and Twitter tweets) on the official website. For enabling "Check-In" on Facebook, the commissioner should add the physical location of the SnowCastle and Sampo to the profile information for further using the function in their social media operations and marketing campaigns. In addition, they should add links to the other social media sites (i.e. adding the Twitter URL to Facebook). Beside the website and online world, the commissioner should promote the social media operations for their already existing customers, both the Finnish and the international visitors, in the office where the Tourist Information Center of Kemi and the Gemstone Gallery are located. It could be beneficial to put signs about e.g. Facebook pages inside the SnowCastle and Sampo. Inside the SnowCastle, there could be signs at the ticket office and the café. The signs could say "Find us on Facebook" or "Remember to Check-in on Facebook". It is advisable to add the Facebook sign to their future advertisements as well as any other place it could be applicable.

As mentioned in the strategy, Facebook is the appropriate channel to reach both the Finnish and international customers ranging from 30 to 50 years of age. To reach the Finnish customers, who are generally young couples with children, the commissioner should seek to join groups on Facebook that are related to their operations to raise awareness for their social media as well as use Facebook as a way to promote events, such as the opening of the SnowCastle or concerts there, and get feedback from the visitors as well as the potential customers. Additionally, the marketing of children's events towards the domestic customer segment, distinguished in the strategy part, is crucial for attracting her and her family to visit. This can be achieved by posting SnowCastle event updates alongside with pictures and videos of previous events that appeal to the families. One good tip for Facebook events that encourages your customers to contribute and participate is to invite all your friends to the event to remind them of it and ask for them to invite their friends to attend and share the event as well. The ways to reach the international audience on Facebook do not differ that much; again, the commissioner should join groups and conversations on related topics (e.g. Finland, Kemi, Lapland and travelling related groups) and also post in English. The content should appeal to the foreigners who seek adventures and new experiences. This can be achieved by posting pictures and videos of the unique services available for example in the SnowCastle such as the SnowHotel and snow bar that are exciting and new to them. The goal is to have them interested enough to start planning a visit to Kemi. This addresses the education and entertainment part of your social media strategy, as presented by Safko & Brake (2009, 675).

The main issue for the commissioner, regardless of which social media channel is in question, is to get the audience engaged; to participate in the campaign by posting convincing and interesting content. As already noted in the thesis this means stories, pictures and videos that entertain, arouse interest and make people want to get involved by commenting and sharing them. Even though the attractions are running only during the winter, the commissioner should update the social media channels during the off-season as well by e.g. informing about how much time till they start building the SnowCastle, what is to be expected next year, ask for suggestions and ideas and post pictures about the building process of the SnowCastle or even the ice conditions during the fall and early winter for Sampo. The commissioner should also post news and articles from other sources that the audience could find interesting. This is especially useful for the international customer segment as this will provide more information about the area and perhaps about other activities in the areas

nearby and help the international customer to plan their trip to Kemi. All of the social media channels allow the messages, alongside with your profile, to start “living a life of their own” by having the fans and followers of your posts share them with their friends who then can share them with their friends. Social media is about networking and this helps you to build a following and harvest the power of the social media network.

For Twitter, it is slightly more about raising brand awareness than about communicating with the audience but it should not be forgotten that Twitter is also a two sided communicative channel. The commissioner still wants people contribute through commenting, retweeting their tweets and participating in any way possible. The target group for reaching via Twitter is most likely younger people and especially representatives of media and press. As previously mentioned, Twitter is not that popular yet among Finns but it is still widely used by businesses and Kemi Tourism can reach the international markets with the international customer segment in mind. The content posted on Twitter does not differ too much from Facebook as it also should include news about the company, such as the opening of the SnowCastle, events taking place there or beginning of the Sampo cruise season, and pictures and videos that appeal to the international customer’s need for adventures and new experiences. The posts should be short and clear and mainly in English. They don’t have to be time consuming as the nature of Twitter is posting quickly and regularly. This creates a feeling of involvement in the company for the followers and this way they feel like they are part of the company. Even though Twitter limits the amount of characters per post, the company is able to post links to other websites for example Facebook Event Page or their website if the 140 characters are not enough. The commissioner should use Twitter lists to find groups of people by interest (e.g. travel) and hashtags (e.g. #snowcastle, #Finland or any other relatable trending topic at that moment) to make their tweets discoverable in the searches and trending topics. This enables finding new customers, especially the adventure seekers. Also it would be great if the commissioner could take advantage of the TV, magazine and other media stories written every year by finding these social influencers on Twitter and getting them to include the company as @mention to direct traffic to their profile as well. What the commissioner can also do on Twitter to raise awareness is to follow interesting people, famous people (politicians, reporters et cetera) and other businesses and share news and stories that their own followers might find entertaining and interesting. An example of a good profile to follow for Kemi Tourism is Helsinki Tourism’s Twitter account.

The way to approach YouTube and Flickr as communication channels to reach both the domestic and international customer segment is similar to each other as the commissioner can use the already existing Facebook account to login and start using the services. Having the promotional videos for SnowCastle and Sampo on YouTube is a great addition as the customers can find them easily if they are tagged under e.g. “snow hotel” or “travel” as well adding the location to them show they show up on the map, which then allows the customers to find more information about the company through the other social media pages. The featured video for YouTube should be on autoplay so it starts playing automatically when opening the site. The same goes for Flickr and also when uploading the pictures, the emphasis should be on the picture titles as they allow the commissioner to promote the website by adding the URL as the title. It is also important to add other descriptions (when and where taken and who is in the picture et cetera) besides the title to the content uploaded. On Flickr, the commissioner should join groups and communities of related topics. The material updated by the other users on these two channels also act as advertisements to the company’s attractions and the conversation about the company should be monitored in order to understand the customers – after all it is a form of feedback and feedback is part of the conversation sought with social media marketing. The pictures and videos work as persuasion to new customers, especially the international segment, which sees winter locations as exotic and exciting.

TripAdvisor is a relevant social media to reach international tourists; thus, the commissioner should create a company profile instead of just observing it, which is the current situation in the company. It presents a unique opportunity to provide detailed business information with pictures to reach new and already existing customers (e.g. there are comments about SnowCastle by previous visitors). For every new review, the commissioner gets an e-mail and is able to respond to the reviews if necessary. There might be negative reviews from time to time but the reviews can also be used to improve the services and understand the customers better. The reviews are still going to be there, whether the company has a profile or not, which only makes joining TripAdvisor more reasonable for the commissioner to get a chance to influence the conversation by reaching out to reviewers and show that you are listening. Consequently, this builds relationships and trust between the company and its customers. It should also be stated that a tourism organization that has a TripAdvisor profile gives a positive and professional image. To conclude, TripAdvisor can be considered as the most essential source for traveling information for the international segment.

As the aim is to boost up sales, the commissioner should conduct a social media marketing campaign. On Facebook and Twitter, an example of this could be promoting a special deal or discount on the entrance fee on a specific day by giving a coupon for the first ten people who comment on the deal. These special deals and campaigns are focused mainly towards the Finnish customers. If the company already has competitions or campaigns, they should try to adapt them in order for them to function on social media as well. The company has previously run competitions online, e.g. the one on the website of the Finnish TV channel MTV3 that could be transformed into similar campaigns on the social media channels. However, there are several variations to these campaigns that could all be applicable and provide valuable information to the commissioner on whether it is effective or not. It is easy for the commissioner to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns by analyzing how many people have responded to them and whether they have worked. The upcoming online store presents an opportunity to test out the effectiveness of their social media advertising as it can be marketed through social media in general and special campaigns can be run e.g. with discount codes for purchases made via the online store.

This leads to the last part of the action program; measuring the overall performance on social media. The commissioner is able to track the statistics on Facebook and Twitter by relying on the Facebook's statistics site and on Twitter by looking at the number of followers and whether the tweets have gotten retweets or not. This alone tells the commissioner a lot of important information on how well their social media operations are perceived and if there is need to adapt it due to something not working effectively. Furthermore, measuring the effectiveness and visibility of their social media presence, Google Analytics provides an excellent, easy-to-use and most importantly, free method of analyzing the statistics of their websites. This is a way to track the country origin of the online visitors and allow the marketers to focus their advertising and campaigns to the most important countries.

The commissioner contemplates the possibility of using social media as a way to connect and communicate with their business partners, i.e. the other travel organizations and agencies around the world. Currently, the commissioner uses e-mail for these purposes. The prerequisite for this co-operation to take place in social media is of course, that all the parties are using and present in social media. The aim for the commissioner is to have a common place where all the necessary information could be shared and communication would take place. It all comes down to the question how

innovative and creative the commissioner is as social media does allow e.g. the creating of groups and specialized lists where communication and sharing of information can happen between the parties. As the commissioner becomes more and more familiar with social media, experimenting social media as the main communication channel for this purpose is encouraged. In Facebook, Kemi Tourism can comment, share and like the posts of their partners (which of course increase their own visibility as well) where as on Twitter you are able to follow the partners either passively or actively by retweeting et cetera. On Flickr and YouTube, commenting, sharing and rating content is a great way to stay connected with the partners as well and engage them by having interesting and exiting content available.

Schedule wise the action program should be put to use as soon as possible; at least so that the profiles would be created to lay the foundation for the beginning of the social media campaign. But if there is no time or resources to start including social media in the operations during this winter season, the commissioner could do it as the most hectic time period has passed and they could invest sufficient amount of effort to it. To conclude, there is a better chance for successfully implementing social media to their operations if it is done with careful consideration and with time.

5.5 Resources

The workforce includes thirteen permanent employees but due to the season dependant nature of the tourism in Kemi, the workforce number increases to over 30 employees during the winter months (Kemi Tourism, PowerPoint –presentation, 19.9.2011). The seasonal workers are not considered to be of any use in the social media campaign so the work generated from applying social media to their operations is basically for the personnel at the office. It is clear that with a new activity, the work load will increase but as stated previously in this thesis, a ten to fifteen minute session everyday on social media can still result to a functioning social media campaign. However, the marketing manager is the most likely person to handle the social media operations at first but the goal is to involve more employees to produce a more effective campaign.

The organization's turnover for the year 2010 was over 2.8 million Euros (Kauppalehti.fi, date of retrieval 7.11.2011). According to the commissioner, the marketing budget has been sufficient thus

far. With social media, the costs are small as the employees are already there and it is mainly a time management issue; who is the most capable employee to operate social media most effectively. There is always an option to hire someone to handle social media. Furthermore, the commissioner has not out ruled this option completely so it could happen in the future. If the commissioner sees social media as a possibility and decides to implement it, there is also an opportunity to get non-paid trainees to help out with the tasks at the office and especially in social media.

6 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis is to present the commissioner a social media marketing plan; hence, the theoretical background is complimented with analyses and an action plan. This part discusses the different methodologies presented in this thesis.

According to Kumar (2008, 5) research methodology refers to the systematic way of solving the research problem. In this case, the research problem is derived from the aspect of social media and how it can be applied to the commissioner company to improve the overall marketing. All in all, this research is of qualitative nature. To define qualitative research, it is often done by distinguishing it from quantitative research, as explained by Walliman (2011, 71-72), in which qualitative data is measurable, usually in numbers. However, qualitative research usually refers to studies not attempting to measure the results through statistics and often involves methods such as interviews and observations as mentioned by Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger (2005, 17). Akin to Merriam (2009, 21) description of qualitative research as an umbrella term to various practices and approaches to research, also this thesis is a constitution of a few research methods. Furthermore, the different research methods in this thesis include desktop research. The thesis can also be considered as a project-based thesis as it has a clear outcome in the form of a social media marketing plan that the commissioner can use.

Data can be divided into two categories; primary and secondary. Primary data refers to the first and most immediate recorded data of a situation where as secondary data refers to data interpreting or recording of primary data. (Walliman 2011, 69-71.) In this thesis, the primary data consists of the authors' own interpretations of the social media phenomena as well as the commissioner company's situation while the secondary data consists of the theoretical background on the said phenomena. To prevent having low quality of secondary data, the authors' of this thesis aimed to present sufficient amount of different sources. Furthermore, the authors reflect the theoretical framework to the practical side of the thesis, this being the social media marketing plan.

7 CONCLUSION

The research task of this thesis was to examine the use of social media in the commissioner company's marketing. The thesis reflected on the marketing and social media marketing theories by applying them to practice. This part discusses the findings and outcomes of this thesis project focusing on the social media marketing plan produced for the commissioner.

Social media has become part of business and marketing. As the commissioner company's current marketing does not involve social media, the theoretical background and introduction to the phenomena is necessary to support the strategic implementation of social media into their marketing activities. It is crucial for the commissioner to understand the underlying themes of social media to be able to successfully market in social media. Furthermore, the distinction between traditional media and social media has to be established in order to understand how social media functions and what social media should be used for. The nature of social media is communicative and it cannot be viewed as a traditional marketing communications channel where the company communicates its messages one-sidedly to the customers. Social media demands interaction and participation by both of the parties, the company and its audience, to succeed.

Based on the analyses conducted for the social media marketing plan, it is clear that the current marketing efforts could be enhanced with the addition of social media. The situation analysis suggested that the external business environment of Kemi Tourism is highly competitive due to the nature of the tourism industry and competition comes from destinations all over the world. The commissioner seems to have a complete and competitive product and has only a few similar competitors in the neighboring area. The company is only weakened by the lack of resources, which results in the lack of finances and small number of employees. Due to these factors, social media presents a unique opportunity that is both cost-efficient and convenient way for smaller organizations to market. Moreover, the global reach of social media provides the commissioner a possibility to increase its visibility on an international level.

The goal and objective of using social media as a part of the company's marketing is to increase profits and overall visibility of the organization; consequently, the strategy should aim to reach these goals. The strategy for implementing social media in the commissioner company segments the customers and the different social media channels to examine the variables that affect the decision making and planning of their social media marketing activities. The strategy explains what the commissioner seeks to achieve with the addition of social media and how to approach the implementation. The strategy is followed by an action program which describes the specific measures to be taken in the implementation of social media into their marketing. This part is in detail and provides the commissioner a clear and guided approach to the implementation of social media. The resources section examines the commissioner company's resources for the purpose of the social media marketing plan and what elements affect it.

As the purpose of the thesis was to examine the possible use of social media in marketing for the commissioner company, this project with an emphasis on the social media marketing plan seeks to provide the commissioner with a comprehensive description of social media and its use in marketing. The commissioner company has little social media presence as of now and lacks interest in the phenomena and also the limited resources have prevented the company to further invest into social media. If these are taken into consideration, the thesis aims to provide more information to the commissioner about social media and its benefits for the company to begin devoting time and effort to it.

All in all, the suggestion for the commissioner is to deepen the company's presence in social media in any way possible as there are benefits to be gained from all of the social media channels chosen and presented for the commissioner in this thesis. The commissioner might feel burdened by the allocation of resources to the social media marketing activities but the encouraged time to be spent on these activities is very manageable and cost-efficient. The main idea is to promote communication between the company and its audience, which cannot be achieved by the means of traditional media.

8 DISCUSSION

The main goals for this thesis were examining the use of social media as a marketing tool as well as providing a social media marketing plan for the commissioner. The topic was chosen by the authors and suggested to the commissioner as a development task and research to study the possibility of including social media into the commissioner company's marketing activities. The topic was approached by studying the theory of marketing and social media as a marketing tool. The subjects of the framework made it possible to apply the theory into practice in this thesis. Furthermore, the theory was used to support the executing of the social media marketing plan for the commissioner company. The overall research method was qualitative and desktop research was used to examine the elements of the framework. To compliment the theoretical part of the thesis, a concrete plan was created for the commissioner. In addition, the aim of the social media marketing plan was to provide suggestions for the commissioner on how to approach social media as a business.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that even though the commissioner company is a small organization, owned by the city, and has only a few employees, the implementation of social media into their marketing activities would benefit the organization in a whole different way compared to their current marketing. Social media marketing generates visibility and brings the organization closer to its audience and with a comprehensive approach to social media, the outcome will be much more than plain brand awareness and overall visibility by creating relationships through engagement and building trust by being more accessible and approachable. Furthermore, the authors observed the commissioner's current social media presence, i.e. SnowCastle's Facebook pages as well as reviews on TripAdvisor, and noted that there is already positive conversation, although one-sidedly coming from the audience, going on. This only enforces the importance of joining social media and the conversation.

The authors of this thesis were not familiar with social media as a marketing tool per se but both of the authors had a basic understanding of the different social media channels and some ideas of how they can be applied to marketing. The thesis provided the authors a comprehensive and profound picture of social media as a part of company's marketing and as a business activity. The thesis also

allowed the authors to examine the effects of tourism industry and more importantly, how the different characteristics of the commissioner company impact the planning and implementing of social media into the current marketing activities. The thesis evolved into a project based thesis as the initial idea was to provide suggestions and ideas for the commissioner; however, the development task was later changed to a concrete social media marketing plan. This motivated the authors to examine the deeper meaning of social media as a business activity, and it presented a clearer and more rational end result to the research process. The authors were pleased with the methods chosen but realized it would have been more favorable for the proceeding of the thesis if the methods and research tasks had been more precise from the very beginning. Furthermore, if the topic had come from the commissioner itself, it might have been stricter from the start and the authors would have had less impact on the research structure. As far as reliability of the thesis is concerned, the thesis relies on expert knowledge for the theoretical framework and seeks to provide various sources for information. In addition, the authors contemplate the experts' notions in the contrast of the commissioner company's situation to provide additional value to the theoretical part. As for the validity of this thesis, the authors want to emphasize that although some of the theoretical framework is discussed on a general level the commissioner company had a great impact on the whole research process and thus, generalization of the results of this thesis is not appropriate. The purpose of this thesis was to provide the commissioner with a concrete plan and due to this; the end results are only applicable to the commissioner company. Schedule wise the authors were content with the initial plan of completing the thesis during the fall 2011 but the changes made in the middle of the process prolonged it. It was more of a time management issue as the changes did not necessarily increase the work load.

The thesis provides the commissioner an introduction to social media as a marketing tool to support the possible implementation of social media into their marketing activities. As the process drew to a close, ideas for future development tasks and projects arose. A project-based thesis by business students could be conducted in a form of a promotional campaign e.g. for the SnowCastle where social media is exploited. Also, if the commissioner implements social media into their marketing, a possibility for a future study could be measuring the effectiveness of the efforts. All in all, there are countless opportunities for future studies due to the diverse nature of social media marketing and

thus, the commissioner should consider outsourcing some of them to receive ideas and suggestions from parties outside their own business environment to advocate innovativeness and creativeness.

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