Benefits and challenges of using social media in marketing strategy: Investigating small- and medium-sized companies in the Oulu region

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Abstract

This thesis explains what social media marketing is as a phenomenon and what kind of roles it can fill in a company’s overall marketing strategies. The thesis also provides very practical information on how small/medium-sized companies can use social media channels in their daily marketing activities. This has been achieved through a literature review on the topic supported by an empirical multi-case study. The motivation for doing qualitative research of social media marketing in small/medium-sized companies came from a lack of such research in the literature review.

The theoretical part of the thesis covers some of the basic theory about social media, different kinds of social media channels and mobile social media. Social media’s growing importance in marketing is also addressed in the literature review through earlier research, especially regarding how companies can benefit from using social media in their marketing and how it may challenge them.

The multi-case study research was conducted on five small/medium-sized companies representing different industries in the Oulu area. Each company was interviewed on the topic of social media marketing, with emphasis on the motivation for using social media, social media role in marketing strategy, and the benefits and challenges of social media. The ongoing shift from traditional media towards digital media channels like social media is present in both the theoretical and empirical parts of the study.

The findings from earlier research in the literature review concentrated on big brands and companies. The findings of the case study showed that social media can play a major role in the marketing strategy of small and medium sized companies. The empirical findings indicate that social media has positively impacted the sales of the case companies and that the challenges vary depending on the size and industry of a company. However lack of marketing resources, especially time, is a common factor. The findings show that social media provides a faster, cheaper and more flexible marketing platform when compared to traditional media such as newspapers and radio. However, this requires the building of an active social media presence and continuous work to adapt and improve.

Together the literature review and the case study should provide the reader with a broad view into the phenomenon of social media marketing. The literature review section is mostly concentrated on corporate view and big brands, while the case study provides a good look into social media marketing of small and medium sized companies. Especially small start-up companies should find some valuable information and get initial ideas from this thesis for improving their marketing efforts with the help of social media channels.

Keywords
Social media marketing, multi-case study, benefits, challenges, small/medium-sized company

Supervisor
Postdoctoral researcher Karin Väyrynen
Foreword

This thesis will be the last piece of student work that I produce at the University of Oulu and I could not feel more relieved now that it is ready. It took me a long time to find the right angle for my research, before I ended up with this topic I considered many other topics and approaches abandoning them all. I am happy I did, because in this study I did research that I was personally interested of, research that I felt meaningful and that I’m now proud to present.

First of all I want to thank my fiancé Susanna for bearing to listen to all my thought process over the last year or so and for arranging time for me to write this thesis on many weekends. Special thanks to Karin for her great support and guidance as the supervisor of this thesis. I want to thank all the case companies for supporting this thesis with their input, it was a pleasure to work with you. Last I want to thank my parents for all their support and help during my studies.

Paavo Orajärvi

In Oulu, April 24th, 2016
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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and motivation of the study

The purpose of this master’s thesis is to introduce readers to what social media marketing is about, initially from the perspective of theory and earlier research, and followed by empirical data and analysis of social media use in marketing context. The goal is to offer readers the basic knowledge of social media, in general and in the marketing context, and show how it can be used in actual company environments.

The main motivation for conducting this study is the ever growing importance of social media in the area of marketing and as part of people’s everyday lives. Printed media is losing its power to digital channels on the web like social media and the marketing world is forced to adapt to this change. This adaptation is what all existing companies need to address in their marketing efforts and it is something that the new entrants can take advantage of. With the empirical part of the thesis the author wanted to investigate how social media is being used by some of the local companies in the area of Oulu to help other companies make better use of the channel in the future.

The fast rise, future potential and role of social media in the area of marketing has been noted by numerous researchers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tuten, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kietzmann, Hemkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). Also mobile marketing in relation with social media has been under consideration by researchers for a while now. (Kaplan, 2012; Humphreys, 2013)

There are many reasons for the rise of social media in marketing. Social media can be seen as a more reliable source of information from the consumer point of view when compared to traditional media (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015). It can also work as a low cost alternative compared to traditional communication channels (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011), offering potentially very fast word of mouth diffusion within the social media channels (Li, Lai & Chen, 2011). Along with positive benefits to be gained, there are also risks involved for companies willing to engage in social media, especially concerning company or brand reputation (Aula, 2010). The social media industry report from the year 2015 by Steltzner M. offers an extensive amount of versatile social media marketing related data.

1.2 Research questions and research method

In fall 2015, the author made a thorough literature review in his bachelor’s thesis (Orajärvi, 2015) of the topic of social media marketing with following research questions: What are the challenges and possibilities arising from marketing in social media? How can companies prepare for these challenges? (Part 2 & 3) The aim of that thesis was to give readers a clear understanding of the basics of social media marketing. Why is it important now? How to succeed and what should marketers avoid doing? Building on the earlier work this master’s thesis aims to use empirical data to further the understanding on: How do companies use social media in their daily marketing efforts? That is the main research question for this thesis. The supporting research questions are the following: Why is it important to them? What challenges have the companies experienced? How important is the role of social media as a part of overall marketing strategy?

Qualitative case study was chosen to be the research method for the purpose of this thesis as it provided the means for gathering most detailed level empirical data on social media
marketing for analysis purposes in the eyes of the author. Gathering first hand qualitative data in the form of interviews seemed superior to other methods for delivering practical level information on how to use social media for marketing purposes. It was also a method that the author had familiarized himself well with during his earlier studies.

1.3 Main contribution

The main contributions of this thesis are twofold. The first contribution consists of the findings from the literature review that provide an overall understanding of social media marketing as a phenomenon, its benefits in marketing use and the challenges it presents to companies. The second contribution is the empirical case study and the analysis of how five companies from the Oulu area are using social media in their day to day marketing efforts and what role it plays in their overall marketing strategies. The author expects the thesis will help companies understand how social media can be useful specifically to their business, give them insight to understand the possible challenges and risks, and to help them implement the changes required to make best use of the channel.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The first part of the thesis (Chapter 2) covers the previous research knowledge of social media marketing such as definitions of basic concepts and the different types of social media. The role of social media in marketing strategy will be addressed through literature. Mobile social media marketing will be introduced as its own sub-type, as it offers more targeted ways of marketing. The second part of the thesis (Chapter 3) will explain the opportunities and risks included with the use of social media according to the literature. A few key challenges of implementing social media strategies are introduced, and some guidance and solutions from literature are also provided.

Chapter 4 covers the research method used in the thesis, the justification for choosing the method and introduces the data collection process and implementation of the study. In Chapter 5, the data analysis is presented. The findings will be discussed in Chapter 6, comparing the findings from the different cases under investigation and comparing them with previous literature. In Chapter 7 the thesis is concluded, the limitations of the study are mentioned and some interesting viewpoints for future studies introduced.
2. Different levels of social media marketing

This section will describe the terminology of social media marketing on different levels according to earlier research. Starting with some definitions of key terms on the topic we move on to different types of social media, and explain the relationship between traditional marketing efforts and social media marketing. Afterwards some specific mobile marketing opportunities will be explained, for the extent they are related to being part of the social media scene.

2.1 Basic definitions

2.1.1 Social media and social media marketing

In this chapter the author will introduce a few definitions of social media from the literature that have best caught the key points of the phenomenon and choose one that will be used as a basis for this thesis. Social media marketing as an activity will also receive a definition from the literature.

Social media refers to online communities that are participatory, conversational, and fluid. These communities enable members to produce, publish control, critique, rank, and interact with online content. The term can encompass any online community that promotes the individual while also emphasizing an individual’s relationship to the community, the rights of all members to collaborate and be heard within a protective space, which welcomes the opinions and contributions of participants. (Tuten, 2008, p. 20)

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) describe social media as follows: “Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC).” (p. 61) Similarly Kietzmann et al. (2011) puts it like this: “Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content.” (p.241)

All the definitions are quite similar, but in this thesis the author chooses Kietzmann et al.’s (2011) definition to be the one that best describes the whole phenomenon, for it also takes into account the mobile world we live in today.

Social media marketing on the other hand is a way of promoting a website, brand or business by interacting with, or attracting the interest of current or prospective customers through the channels of social media (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

2.1.2 Web 2.0 and user generated content

The term “Web 2.0” was first used to describe a new way in which software developers and end-users started to utilize the world wide web; that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion. Some important technical functionalities like Adobe flash, RSS and AJAX among others allowed this change to happen. User generated content is described to be the sum of all ways people make use of social media. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)
According to OECD (2007) UGC has three requirements: first it needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a select group of people, second it needs to show a certain amount of creative effort, and third it needs to have been created outside of professional routines and practices. However, Wyrwoll (2014) states that social media and especially user-generated content, is a relatively young field of research and that there is no common understanding of the subject yet.

Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro (2012) point out that marketers talk about both UGC and consumer generated media (CGM) when referring to social media. They use these terms as synonyms, but want to distinguish that the media are the platforms used for distribution, while the content is what all those users around the world are creating, whatever the format. Authors see the producers of social media content as creative consumers and that these creative consumers are in possession of great power for value creation. The value can be in the form of taking part in a discussion, reviewing of products, or even product development.

2.2 Types of social media

There are numerous types of social media services available and to provide some classification of different social media services, in this thesis the author will use the Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) classification. It consists of six types of social media: Collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. In this classification authors have also divided different groups by the dimensions of Social presence/Media richness and Self-presentation/Self-disclosure. See Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social presence/ Media richness</th>
<th>Blogs (e.g., Facebook)</th>
<th>Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)</th>
<th>Social networking sites (e.g., YouTube)</th>
<th>Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)</th>
<th>Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Classification of social media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 62)

Tuten (2008) similarly classifies social-networking sites, virtual worlds, social news and bookmarking sites, wikis, forums and opinion sites under the umbrella of the phrase social media. Zarrella (2010) lists blogs, microblogs (Twitter), social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn), media-sharing sites (Youtube, Flickr), social bookmarking and voting sites (Digg, Reddit), review sites (Yelp), forums and virtual worlds (Second Life) as being parts of social media.

So there are some slight differences in the categorizations by different researchers, but they have close to same content. For the lack of review sites found within the classification by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), it will be additionally included as it has some marketing potential especially in building trust for products and services.
2.2.1 Collaborative projects

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) collaborative projects allow many end-users to create content together simultaneously. Later they divide the projects into text-based content projects called wikis and social bookmarking sites where users can rate internet links or media content.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, is probably the best known project for the first category, while Digg, Delicious and Reddit are good examples of social bookmarking. To further explain the term, Reddit lets users of the network send links or text for other users to vote on, links with most positive votes get higher visibility in the network. Open source development projects are also good examples of text-based content projects and they tend to use their own internal wikis as one of the communication channels in their projects.

Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi (2012) describe social bookmarking as follows: “Social bookmarking is a very useful way to access a compiled list of bookmarks from a variety of computers, manage a large amount of bookmarks and share the bookmarks with contacts.” (p. 4448)

The marketing value of social bookmarking is in the value gained towards search engine rankings. Social bookmarking creates backlinks or incoming links to a website. Search engines use these links as kind of “votes” in favor of the page content and more votes count for a higher rank in searches. The domains that these links originate from, are weighed by search engines, so ones coming from more popular sites like Reddit have more value than ones from an ordinary blog for example. (Saxman, 2013.)

2.2.2 Blogs and micro blogs

Blogs were the early birds of social media, they are special types of websites that usually display date-stamped entries in reverse chronological order (OECD 2007). Blogs are most commonly text-based, but many kinds of media formats can be used to enhance the experience on some platforms. Blogs can be used as a business tool where one can write entries regarding content about the business area, products and other things. Blogs also allow interaction between the author and audience (readers/subscribers) in the form of comments. The audience can share their opinions and thoughts on the entries and the author can also further participate in the conversations arising from an entry. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

Singh, Veron-Jakson & Cullinane (2008) have found many uses for blogs in enhancing marketing efforts. Similarly to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), they see that information sharing is an important use of blogs, but blogs can also be used for market research, building brand loyalty and for better communication to different customer segments. Ease and efficiency of blogging also support its use in marketing.

Li et al. (2011) see the value of blogging as a word of mouth engine and a great promotional platform for products and services. In their paper “Discovering influencers for marketing in the blogosphere.” they have seen blog influencers as an important factor for successful word-of-mouth marketing. By targeting influential blogs/blog sites marketers can diffuse promotional information through the networks. These influencing blogs work as nodes for launching marketing strategies improving the effectiveness and availability of blog marketing efforts. Li et al. (2011) also provide a Marketing Influence Value Model (Figure 4) that helps in identifying these influential nodes in the blogosphere, the model will be explained in Chapter 3.
Micro blogging is a special type of blogging where the size of an entry is limited, e.g. Twitter entries can contain up to 140 characters. Twitter has huge potential for marketing efforts: it is easy and it requires little investment of time. It can quickly increase buzz, sales and consumer insight. Twitter for businesses is a fast, easy and free way to: Stay on top of competitors actions, keep in touch with customers, offer discounts and sales announcements and get leads on business opportunities, trends etc. These benefits are very similar to the benefits mentioned earlier on blogs. By their nature, blogs aid search optimization and reduce the burden of post-purchase support and customer service. (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakhsmi 2012.)

Getting deeper into Twitter marketing, the author found a web article by Matthew Yeoman (2014), who provides a set of techniques to improve use of Twitter for better marketing value. As with blogs, influencers are seen as important with micro blogs, twitter in this case. The biggest fans of products are company’s valuable promoters as are the trusted industry voices. Companies should engage these influencers and try to find ways to cooperate with them for mutual benefit. Yeoman also gives tips for following competition through Twitter and optimizing tweets for higher engagement with the target audience. (Yeoman, 2014.)

### 2.2.3 Content communities

There are content communities available for many different media types like text, photos, video and even slideshows. Flickr & Instagram for photos, and YouTube for videos, are some of the best known content communities. The main objective of these services is the sharing of content between users. There is a low level of self-presentation related to these communities and only little data about users is shared within the community. For their high popularity, companies see content communities as an important contact channel for contests, product related content, sharing of recruiting videos or even press announcements. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

Contrary to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) content community such as YouTube may also be seen as social network for it meets the basic criteria of social networking by enabling the development and maintenance of networks on the site (Tuten, 2008). Tuten (2008) also sees that posting videos and encouraging fans to interact are the main marketing mechanics of YouTube, but YouTube also offers tools for branding for example profile feature and contests where brands can seek consumer-generated advertising. The advertising potential in YouTube is huge and may allow very cheap media exposure when a video gains lots of popularity, or goes “viral” as such occasion is sometimes called.

Alicia Johnston (2015) has written a comprehensive guide for creating an Instagram marketing strategy. She sees the platform as a great tool for branding and especially customer engagement: “As people join Instagram in droves, brands have a unique opportunity for engagement with their fans: Instagram posts generate a per-follower engagement rate of 4.21 %—58 times more engagement per follower than Facebook and 120 times more than Twitter.” To find a working strategy each business will need to carefully plan their engagement in Instagram beforehand by defining things like: objectives, content strategy, style, comment management, hashtag monitoring and of course analyzing results. (Johnston, 2015.)

### 2.2.4 Social networking sites

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) define social networking sites as applications that enable users to connect with one and other through personal information profiles, inviting other users
like friends and colleagues, giving access to the personal profiles and sending email and instant messages between each other. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google + and Myspace are few of the best known social networking sites.

Facebook provides advertisers vast selection of strategic tools: Targeted display ads, Social ads, Sponsored stories, Facebook pages (branding), Facebook developers (content development) and Beacon (social news feed) (Holzner, 2009; Tuten, 2008). These features together provide a platform that gives marketers a lot of options for building a suitable business strategy.

Some advantages of using Facebook in marketing are mentioned by Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi (2012) as follows: Establishing & enhancing brand image, establishing and enhancing authority in the market, market research purposes, using Facebook Groups for networking and of course targeted advertising.

Myspace also possesses a lot of features quite similar to Facebook: profiles, video, instant messaging, groups and communities, but also differentiates with features such as music and blogs (Tuten, 2008). She also says in her book that Facebook is the second largest social network, Myspace being number one. However, sometime between 2008 and 2009 Facebook overtook Myspace (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012) and has been on the top ever since.

2.2.5 Virtual game worlds & virtual social worlds

Kaplan describes virtual words as the manifestation of social media because they offer highest level of both social presence and media richness. The first kind of virtual worlds are virtual game worlds, massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs). World of Warcraft and EverQuest are some of the best known games of the genre. In these games players choose a role within the game world, through these roles they interact with other players and the environment in various different ways, determined by the rule set of the game. These games mostly possess marketing value within the game and franchise, but players often feel very strongly about their games, which can be leveraged by others in their marketing campaigns. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

Virtual social worlds are the second type of virtual worlds where users can choose their way of behavior more freely compared to games, even live a virtual life as they would in real life. Compared to games, user’s self-presentation is less controlled. Second Life by Linden Research Inc. is one of the best known social worlds. It allows users to do their real life things, but also lets users create content, for example clothing. These user creations can be sold for virtual currency that in turn can be exchanged for actual currency. This kind of allows users to actually “make a living” within the social world. Marketing potential is very prominent within these virtual social worlds for advertising, virtual product sales and marketing research. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

Tuten (2008) separates the two virtual world types by stating that social worlds are game-like, but lack the goal orientation of virtual games. She also sees the marketing potential, but points out that these worlds are communities above all else.

2.2.6 Review sites

Some businesses have engaged their customers to review their products and made it an excellent way of promoting their brand in the eyes of consumers. By allowing potential customers to see how others have rated a specific product, they are more likely to trust
that the product is worth the money if the reviews are good, the others buyers strongly recommend it and say they would buy it again. Research has shown 76% of consumers use these online reviews to help decision making. (Li & Bernoff, 2008.)

This allows consumers to have great power both positive and negative. This is also emphasized by Tuten (2008), encouraging authenticity and transparency to build credibility when seeking opinions from users, it is also advised to let users rate the review content itself. Yelp is one of the best known social media review sites where users can give their opinions on different kinds of services such as hotels and restaurants. Users can leave a star rating ranging from one to five and leave comments and pictures.

2.3 Social media marketing in relation to traditional marketing

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) are the guidelines that companies use to communicate with their target markets. According to Boone & Kurtz (2009) integrated marketing communications attempts to coordinate and control the various elements of the promotional mix – advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, and sales promotion – to produce a unified customer-focused message and, therefore, achieve various organizational objectives.

The definition above means that companies want to keep their sales and promotion messages unified which is achievable when we consider the traditional ways of promotion. However, communication in the era of social media can no longer be controlled as well by companies as in this traditional way.

According to Scott (2010), in the traditional marketing paradigm, marketing is one way interaction where the producer is the sender and customer is the receiver of messages. Today in the time of social media, marketers need to communicate in multi-way interaction where these roles of receiver and sender are mixed (as cited by Lagrosen & Grunden, 2014). Similarly Saravanakumar & Sugantha Lakshmi (2012) compare traditional media channels to be “one direction static show technologies”, while new web technologies (social media) allow anyone to create and issue their own content.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) say that the rise of social media has led to democratization of corporate communication and that power has shifted from marketers and public relations people to the individuals and the communities creating, sharing and consuming social media in its many forms.

This leads to the problem that companies need to address this new kind of communication in their IMC strategy in order to have at least some control over the kind of strong word of mouth that social media in its different forms enables for social media users in the role of being consumers of products and services. Companies with established marketing strategies may struggle to make the jump into this new environment. Mangold & Faulds (2009) state that there is too little guidance available in the literature to help marketing managers incorporate social media into their IMC strategies, this is why many managers are overlooking social media as a promotional channel.

Because the traditional paradigm of promotion mix does not support social media as a part of IMC strategy, Mangold & Faulds (2009) propose that social media should be considered a hybrid component of the promotional mix and therefore be incorporated as an integral part of the organization’s IMC strategy. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) This idea is presented in Figure 2.
Figure 2. New communications paradigm (Mangold and Faulds 2009, p. 360)

So the communication direction with traditional media used to be all about business to consumer (B2C) or business to business (B2B), but now social media enables consumers to talk to one another (C2C). This new way creates more powerful word-of-mouth that cannot be directly controlled by companies, but they can influence the conversations that consumers have with one another (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

There is also a customer relationship management (CRM) aspect to the matter sometimes allowing customer to communicate to businesses directly. (C2B) This is pointed out by Baird & Parasnis (2011) advising companies to ask their customers for input to better understand what they value. They encourage open dialogue and participation by giving customers ways to show their ideas and let them as a group decide what would be good direction to innovate products further. Involving customers with your products will help businesses build advocacy and brand affinity.

Considering social media interaction from the customer point of view is also a wise approach. By understanding why customer would be interested to interact with brand and managing to give customers what they seek from social media will get the customer on your side in the long run. (Baird & Parasnis, 2011.) Kietzmann et al. (2011) see this as a big barrier for firms, because the change from traditional marketing to this new way of listening to customers, engaging in an appropriate manner and responding to them is so much different than what they are used to. This is especially hard because the old management methods are ill-suited for such new ways of communication. (Kietzmann et al., 2011.)

Boone & Kurtz (2009) state that contemporary marketers cannot ignore the phenomenon of social media because consumers have widely adopted it and they are disseminating their personal information and experiences about products and services. Kaplan (2012) also points out that social media should be integrated with traditional media, because in customer’s eyes they are the same.
2.4 Mobile social media and mobile marketing

2.4.1 Early days of mobile marketing

A mobile phone is a personal communication tool that is used every day by billions of people. It is very personal device which means that the owner of each device wants to have control over who can reach it and who cannot. This personal device is also a perfect marketing medium for companies to utilize in order to extend their revenues, which leads us to how mobile marketing works. Matt Haig (2002) expresses the phenomenon well as follows:

Indeed the mobile phone, and text messaging in particular, have completely changed the whole marketing process. In this new context, consumers now notify companies when they want to sign up to a campaign. The challenge lies in making sure they want to receive messages in the first place. Marketers also need to respect the consumer’s right to choose, as uninvited mobile ‘spam’ has proved even more unwelcome that its e-mail counterpart. Any company entering this personal space without an invite is, quite frankly asking for trouble. (Haig, 2002, p. 1-2)

The big SMS pioneers were companies/organizations like Pepsi, Coca cola, McDonalds, New Labor, Carlsberg, and Heineken. There were also small and medium sized enterprises (SME) like Rent a flat. These companies were conducting push marketing; they broadcast a general message to a large group of mobile users. There were also a couple of interesting pull marketing examples that gave users location specific marketing data according to their personal needs. Vindigo worked in a way where user tells where he/she is or is going to and receives location based information about places to eat, shop to see etc. Brainstorm is a location based WAP service where users could pull offers based on their location using a promotion finder e.g. user could search for offers in a specific region of a city. (Haig, 2002.)

In the early days of mobile marketing, marketing efforts were mostly conducted with either SMS-messages or wireless application protocol (WAP) based services. These same marketing methods are still in the use today, but new have evolved to take advantage of the technical advancements of mobile devices and services. Today there is a countless number of mobile applications where businesses can embed their mobile marketing efforts in different kinds of formats. The permissions have become quite trivial for they are usually required to be accepted before you gain access to an application/service.

2.4.2 Mobile social media

There are a few definitions available for mobile social media. “Mobile social media is defined as a group of mobile marketing applications that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content.” (Kaplan, 2012) The definition follows the same line as traditional social media in Kaplan & Haenlein (2010).

According to Humphreys (2013): “Mobile social media can loosely be considered software, applications, or services accessed through mobile devices that allow users to connect with other people and to share information, news and content.” (p. 21) Humphreys (2013) continues by stating that defining mobile social media is hard because
social media is constantly being integrated into different aspects of mediated communication and because mobile communication technology constantly changes.

Some types of services in mobile social media identifiable today are: micro blogs (Twitter), Social network sites (Facebook), wikis (Wikipedia), video sharing (YouTube), photo sharing (Flickr), recommendation services (Yelp) and location sharing services (Foursquare) (Humphreys, 2013).

Kaplan (2012) has even provided classification of mobile social media. The classification shows well the difference to traditional social media, see Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location-sensitivity</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quick-timers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange of messages with relevance for one specific location (e.g., Facebook Places; Foursquare; Gowalla)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow-timers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of traditional social media applications to mobile devices (e.g., posting Twitter messages or Facebook status updates)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space-timers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange of messages with relevance for one specific location in time (e.g., Facebook Places; Foursquare; Gowalla)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space-locators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange of messages, with relevance for one specific location, which are tagged to a certain place and read later by others (e.g., Yelp; Qype)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Classification of mobile social media applications (Kaplan 2012, p. 132)

Foursquare, Google latitude, Facebook places and Yelp are some of the best known location-sensitive mobile social media services available.

2.4.3 Mobile social media marketing and its business potential

In their extensive review of mobile marketing research Varnali & Toker (2010) found that there is no agreement on a single definition of mobile marketing that captures the true nature of the phenomenon. Therefore, the scope of mobile marketing is still vague.

However couple of years later, Kaplan (2012) defines mobile marketing as any marketing activity conducted through a ubiquitous network to which consumers are constantly connected using a personal mobile device. There are three conditions: Single network or combination of different networks (with smooth way of switching between networks), constant access to the network and last condition is the use of a personal mobile device most commonly a mobile phone, but also any mobile device capable of connecting to different kinds of networks. The device needs to be personal, not shared with anyone else. Each device has to be identified uniquely for example by a SIM card. (Kaplan, 2012.)

Kaplan (2012) sees the biggest difference between mobile social media to traditional social media to be in the category of space-timer applications. (Figure 3) He points out these differing characteristics in areas of marketing research, communication, sales promotions/discounts, and relationship development/loyalty programs.

Space-timer applications are great platforms for gathering customer data and especially behavioral data to be used for the benefit of a business. They also allow businesses to communicate location-based content depending on users’ current location. When it comes to promotions and discounts Foursquare, for example, allows promotions to be specified
for certain users, but also lets businesses decide on the specific time periods those promotions are available. As an example of nursing customer relations, some space timers allow loyalty programs where the most active users can be granted higher status levels within an application and improved discounts given for these levels. (Kaplan, 2012.)

The trend has been that people introduced to mobile social media come from a background of computer use, however things are changing to the direction of mobile use of the internet. Future generations will more likely get their first online experience on their mobile devices, and social media is likely to be part of their online activity. Affordance is seen as one of the key elements backing mobile social media, it provides the means of media production, distribution and consumption in one device. Social media offers the future potential of a faster way to communicate messages across wider audiences. Using social media as a communication channel can also be much cheaper compared to SMS for consumers. (Humphreys, 2013.)

All this indicates that mobile social media may as well be the focus of social media marketing efforts in the future. There will be data supporting this this trend in Chapter 3.1.

The proliferation of smartphones has spawned a new industry in the creation of applications or “apps” that increase the functionality of smartphones beyond mere communication. (Dinner, van Heerde & Neslin, 2015) In their research on customer engagement through mobile applications they have shown that there is wide user base for commerce apps on the two main mobile operating systems Android and iOS. They continue that companies are also creating branded apps to further engage their customers and that these apps have positive affect on customers in relation to these brands. In cases where these branded apps include social media functionalities, they can been seen as part of the mobile social media marketing efforts.

Huotari & Hamari (2012) have conducted research on how gamification can be used to enhance service marketing. They define gamification to be: “A process of enhancing a service with affordances for gameful experiences in order to support user’s overall value creation.” (p. 19) As one example they mention enhancing service with Foursquare mayor-ship competition in a core service of a cafeteria. The gamified service encourages users to visit the service frequently in order to compete with other users. Mayor-ship is one feature of Foursquare where the user with most check-ins is the one holding the title of mayor. Such ideas can be applied in many service businesses with some innovation which can work for the benefit of a business. (Huotari & Hamari, 2012.)

2.5 Summary

In this chapter the author has introduced the basic concepts related to social media, social media marketing and mobile social media through literature. Different types of social media available have been briefly explained and also given some insight within the marketing context. The relationship between traditional marketing communications and social media marketing has also been explained and how organizations should see social media as a new supporting way to communicate with their audiences. In the next part of this thesis the author will further explain the opportunities and challenges the adoption of social media has brought in to the world of marketing.
3. Opportunities and challenges of social media marketing

In this chapter we go a step deeper into social media as a marketing platform for organizations. Social media offers many new ways for businesses to reach out to their audience and potential customers. The audiences influenced by social media marketing can further disseminate information that can lead to positive affects like increased brand awareness, better customer relations, increased sales and many more. This however is not a given and businesses may face multiple challenges while getting familiar with social media as a marketing tool. These opportunities and challenges of social media will be extensively discussed through literature and the main challenges will also be addressed with some guidance to help marketers on their way.

3.1 The opportunity

3.1.1 Social media statistics

Here are some general statistics that should help one understand the ever growing potential of the web and especially social media as a marketing platform. There are 3.175 billion active internet users in the world, of whom 2.206 billion are active social media users. That means roughly third of the global population is connecting through social media. The growth rate is fast 7.6 percent more internet users and 8.7% more social media users over the last year. The three biggest social networks are Facebook with 1.49 billion users, QQ (Largest Chinese social network) with 832 million users and Twitter with 316 million users. (Kemp, 2015.) There are also a growing number of instant messaging/Voice over IP apps that have similar numbers of users, but they are out of the scope of this thesis for they are not seen as part of social media.

The amount of mobile users is also impressive: There are 3.734 billion unique mobile users, of whom 1.925 billion are using some form of social media platforms (Kemp, 2015). The two dominant app providers App Store (iOS) and Google play (Android) have both roughly 1,5 million apps available for download, Google play having just a slight lead. However the App Store has double the amount of downloads 100 billion against Google play’s 50 billion downloads. This data is originally from Apple & TechCrunch 2015; Mashable & Google 2015; STATISTA 2015 (as cited by Dinner et al., 2015). As mentioned before in chapter 2.4 the world is shifting from desktop use of the internet more towards mobile use. These numbers show that mobile use of the internet has now actually bypassed desktop use of the internet, also the use of social media is growing at a fast pace of 23.8 percent in the last year. (Kemp, 2015.)

With statistics from different sources, Bosomworth (2015) has shown that time spent on mobile media has also bypassed the time spent on desktop/laptop. However he has found contradicting information about mobile ad spending, according to IAB data there is a big void to be filled with mobile ads, while eMarketer data from 2015 shows marketers have already started spending on mobile ads accordingly. In any case this further shows the higher potential within mobile social media marketing compared to traditional social media. (Bosomworth, 2015.)
3.1.2 Social media marketing statistics

Social media marketing industry report 2015 by Michael Steltzner covers data from over 3700 marketers from over twenty different industries. Below are some interesting points of data extracted from the report, that show the current state of social media marketing efforts that are being utilized today. See Table 1. The report is extensive being over fifty pages long, so here are some of the most interesting results that are related to social media from marketer’s perspective chosen by the author.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of interest</th>
<th>Measures as percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly time commitment in social media</td>
<td>6 hours or more 64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 hours or more 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of different social media platforms</td>
<td>Facebook 93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Twitter 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkedIn 71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google+ 56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YouTube 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pinterest 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instagram 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social review sites like Yelp 17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geo-location 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important platform</td>
<td>Facebook 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LinkedIn 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Twitter 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YouTube 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important channels in the future</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest (Over 50% of respondents want to increase their activities on these platforms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid social media</td>
<td>Facebook ads 84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Google ads 41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonly used content by type</td>
<td>Visual 71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blogging 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Videos 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Podcast 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important content type</td>
<td>Blogging 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Videos 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Podcast 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Data from Social media industry report 2015, (Steltzner, 2015)

There are some differences between Business to Customer (B2C) and Business to Business (B2B) marketers. For example B2B marketers value LinkedIn as the most important social media platform (41%), followed by Facebook (30%) and Twitter (19%), on the other hand B2C marketers use Facebook ads more than their B2B counterparts for paid social media. (Steltzner, 2015.)

3.1.3 Social media business opportunities and possible benefits

In the previous chapters many social media opportunities related to specific types of social media were discussed. Social bookmarking can increase your visibility on the internet, blogging is easy and efficient way to communicate with an audience. Mobile social media provides even more options for marketers to use location information to reach their customers better, and even on the go when they are nearby. Aside from these specific advantages, there are many benefits to be gained from use of social media overall according to different researchers.
A global survey among 28,000 internet respondents showed that only about 46% of participants reported trusting traditional advertising, whereas 92% reported trusting word-of-mouth from friends and family and 70% reported trusting online consumer reviews. This data is according to a Nielsen report in 2012 (as cited by Dijkmans et al., 2015). Social media has been a superior method in delivering product information to the consumer when compared to traditional marketing methods (Hall, 2000). According to Hanson et al. (2013) social media marketing is accepted by most users as long as it is not exaggerated, which is not the case with many other marketing communication efforts (as cited by Lagrosen & Grunden, 2014). Social media can also potentially create value fusion, which means that value is created for a whole network including both customers and companies (Lariviere et al., 2013).

Kirtis & Karahan (2011) have found an interesting angle regarding the reasons motivating companies to increase the use of social media within their marketing efforts. They find that phenomena like global recession and other kinds of economic instability may be one major factor to forcing companies to direct their resources more towards social media and decreasing money spent on traditional marketing efforts. They find that the biggest advantages are related to time, audience, relations and cost. Getting rid of the cost related to distribution of traditional marketing can help companies to be more efficient. This cost efficiency of social media marketing is seen promising by other researchers. Social networks provide a channel where information can spread very quickly causing fast word of mouth diffusion, using these social networks for campaigns can generate more sales, while keeping promotion costs low (Li et al., 2011). Similarly Lagrosen & Josefsson (2011) say that social media could be an economic, low cost alternative for entrepreneurs and smaller businesses.

There are some worrying notions from research saying that companies may not truly have understood social media as a marketing channel, or they have misinterpreted how consumers see social media and what they seek from interaction with businesses and brands. Research conducted in Sweden has shown that many companies are not sure how to use social media for marketing purposes, but choose to engage just to appear modern and that they just have to be there in the current media situation (Lagrosen & Josefsson, 2011; Lagrosen & Grunden, 2014).

With data from IBM Institute for Business Baird & Parasnis (2011) studied the relationship between consumers (1000) and businesses (350 executives). They found that main reason for using social media for a consumer is “connecting with friends and family”, 70% of consumers choosing this option, while only 23% were willing to interact with brands. Consumers also value very different things than what companies expect. Consumers want to interact through discounts and coupons and possibilities for purchasing products and services, while companies think these activities would be least appealing to consumers, and think they mostly seek information. Companies also take it for granted that interaction would increase customer loyalty, while the results show that consumers do not necessarily favor a company interacting on social media.

The same data also points out that 70% of executives say that not engaging would make company seem to be “out of touch” for consumers and that over 50% think their competitors are successfully using social media for reaching out to customers. These results support the results of Lagrosen & Josefsson (2011) and Lagrosen & Grunden (2014). The social CRM (Customer relationship management) as Baird & Parasnis (2011) put it, is still taking shape and companies are struggling to make sense of the phenomenon and the best ways to utilize it.
CRM and social media are types of customer focused technology. In their research of nearly 1700 sales professionals, Rodriguez, Ajjan & Peterson (2014) have results that show these technologies positively impact customer orientation and sales performance. When marketing efforts are executed through social media it seems viable to embed CRM processes into the same channels when seen fit. However this requires a lot from the organization to adapt such processes. This also means such methods are more fit to big brands and less so for small businesses and entrepreneurs with less resources.

There is also a relationship between social media and corporate reputation found by Dijkmans et al. (2015). In their study of an international airline, they surveyed 3531 customers and non-customers and found out engagement in social media activities positively affects corporate reputation, especially amongst non-customers. Company reputation is important because it affects supplier selection process of possible customers and also may set market entry barriers for competitors.

You can even include your customers in your product development process by some co-creation project like PepsiCo have used social networks to collect customer insight via its DEW McCray promotions, leading to the production of new variety of its Mountain Dew brand (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

A specific kind of social media communication can also be crucial for a specific product or service. According to Mintel report from 2013 social networks are key delivery channels for festivals and organizers, owing to the large amount of information that can be provided through them, such as artist information, schedules, and general festival information. Much of which is delivered in the last few months leading up to the event. (Mintel, 2013.)

Social media is a flexible channel that can be used for many business processes: management, customer service, buyer research, lead generation, sales promotion delivery channel, paid advertising channel, and branding (Baird & Parasnis, 2010). Weber (2009) has also mentioned lead generation, and includes partnerships, research and development, and employee communication to the list (Weber, 2009). In the year 2013 marketers categorized advertisement on social media to be especially a good branding channel. It can be used to increase brand awareness and brand liking, promote customer engagement and loyalty, inspire consumer word-of-mouth communication about the brand and drive traffic to brand locations on and offline. (eMarketer, 2013.)

More recently, according to marketers themselves in the social media marketing industry report from 2015 the most important benefits are: Increased exposure, increased traffic, developed loyal fans, provided marketplace insight, generated leads, improved search rankings, grown business partnerships, established thought leadership, improved sales, and reduced marketing expenses (Stelzner, 2015).

Possible campaign goals include: build brand awareness, maximize cross media integration, research consumer behaviour, develop ideas for new marketing strategies, drive traffic to corporate sites, improve search engine rankings (due to organic links), increase stickiness, extending the brand message’s exposure time, garner publicity from news coverage of social-media tactics, build awareness of the brand, enhance the brand’s reputation and image, encourage message internalization, increase product sales, accomplish marketing goals with efficiency, engage consumer in a brand experience (Tuten, 2008).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of interest</th>
<th>Findings from literature</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to</td>
<td>Companies want to appear modern and simply feel the need to be in social media just for the sake of current media situation.</td>
<td>Lagrosen &amp; Josefsson, (2011); Lagrosen &amp; Grunden, (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engage in social</td>
<td>70% of executives say that not engaging would make company seem to be “out of touch” for consumers and that over 50% think their competitors are successfully using social media for reaching out to customers.</td>
<td>Baird &amp; Parasnis (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>media.</td>
<td>Phenomena like global recession and other kinds of economic instability may be one major factor to forcing companies to direct their resources more towards social media and decreasing money spent on traditional marketing efforts.</td>
<td>Kirtis &amp; Karahan (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media is</td>
<td>Social media supported business processes: management, customer service, buyer research, lead generation, sales promotion delivery channel, paid advertising channel, and branding.</td>
<td>Baird &amp; Parasnis (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexible to use.</td>
<td>Furthers list with partnerships, research and development, and employee communication</td>
<td>Weber (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of social media</td>
<td>Social media positively affects corporate reputation.</td>
<td>Dijkmans et al. (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marketing.</td>
<td>Biggest advantages are related to time, audience, relations and cost.</td>
<td>Kirtis &amp; Karahan (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The most important benefits are: Increased exposure, increased traffic, developed loyal fans, provided marketplace insight, generated leads, improved search rankings, grown business partnerships, established thought leadership, improved sales, reduced marketing expenses.</td>
<td>Steltzer (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2** Motivation and benefits of social media use in marketing according to literature.

In Table 2 the author has summarized some key findings from the literature review about the benefits of social media as a marketing channel.

### 3.2 Main challenges, solutions and guidance for social media

In this section the author will use two studies from the literature conducted by separate researchers for determining the most important challenges in the area of social media marketing. These two studies were chosen for their qualities of being recently published and the amount of data used. According to Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström & Freundt (2014) study the three main challenges for digital marketers are: The ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights, managing brand health and reputation in a marketing environment where social media plays an important role, and assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing.

Top five challenges extracted from the Social media marketing Industry Report 2015: What social tactics are most effective? (92%) What are the best ways to engage my
In the following sub-sections the author will use literature to explain these challenging topics in the area of social media marketing and also provide guidance and solutions to these problems which are offered within the literature.

3.2.1 Risks of social media communication and protecting reputation

The free creation and sending of content combined with the interactive and sometimes snowballing nature of social media makes it a tricky communication channel for companies. As companies need to protect their reputation, social media as a channel is very risky because companies cannot have adequate control over conversations about themselves. One example of the power of social media was could be seen in the H&M’s “trashgate” incident, where the company was caught trashing unsold clothes and dumping them instead of donating them for people in need. The New York Times was unable to get comments from the company, but when the public got their hands on the story on Twitter, the quick spread of the public dissatisfaction within the channel finally forced the company to react. (Aula, 2010.)

There are some risks related to specific platforms arising from the literature. Blogs are supposed to be used as interactive tools and they require management from the parties running them. If you are not following the activity of a blog, customers will be left wondering what is going on, marketers need to respond to the interaction in order to avoid negative perception from the audience. (Singh et al., 2008.) There is support to this claim that blogs are a form of online media that require a long-term investment to help and engage the customers and create more interest in the product offering (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakhsmi, 2012). From a corporate viewpoint there is also a concern that content communities like YouTube carry the risk of being used as platforms for the sharing of copyright-protected materials (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

There is some merit to considering negative feedback received from social media about companies’ products or services and using it for improvement, however Singh et al. (2008) express concerns about how much weight can be given to feedback from anonymous sources when the context of that feedback given is not clear and it is hard to specify the true cause of the problem. There are also risks embedded in user rating/review environments, as several researchers have shown, that posted product ratings and reviews become increasingly negative as rating environments mature, as Leeflang et al. (2014) summarized from literature in their research.

Hutchings (2012) has seen some less obvious risks of using social media tools like Facebook and Twitter. The first advice is for marketers to apply same best practices like ASA (Advertising standards authority) principles in social media campaigns as they do in traditional advertising: “legal, decent, honest and truthful”. This is to ensure marketing messages communicated through social media are seen as such and to ensure the quality of messages communicated thus preventing risk of possible conflicts. Secondly social media policy is promoted to be a necessary tool to prevent misbehavior of employees and to protect the company when accusations of bad communication or complaints against an employee arise. The third and last risk that should be addressed is the situation where an employee with extensive commitment to social media and a substantial audience is parting ways with a company. The follower list of a company account can be seen as
company property and to protect this property companies should also include this matter into their social media policy. (Hutchings, 2012.)

When it comes to employee use of social media there are a lot of things that must be thought through in order to mitigate risks related to these channels. What is the code of behaviour on social media? What can employees share with the community and what is to be kept secret? Accountability, fairness and transparency related issues also need to be addressed. (Weber, 2009.)

To solve this issue Weber advices companies to set rules that guide employees to use the social tools on the web safely and also to set policies for the cases such as accountability for a time problems arise. All the employees and managers that are working with the social web need to be given adequate training covering these matters and best practices, and rewards for good actions also endorsed. So Weber (2009) and Hutchings (2012) have similar concerns for social media, but Weber (2009) adds the educational element to further help businesses control their communication.

3.2.2 How to get started? Planning social media strategy, tactics and management tools

Everything marketing related should start with the careful planning of a campaign. A campaign must have an objective and the usefulness of social media needs to be evaluated against it. So if marketers see potential in using social media in a campaign, they need to further plan who they want to reach out to and what kind of social media strategy they are going to execute. What channels? What is the content that will be in the center of messages? Tactics are about which specific sites and tools will be used to achieve the objectives of the campaign. During execution marketers need to be ready for adjusting the strategy according to responses. (Tuten, 2008.) The campaign objectives can consist of anything mentioned in the end of chapter 3.1.3. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) also emphasize the alignment of activities between channels and that integration of channels both social media and traditional is advised. Mangold & Faulds (2009) share this same opinion advising integration of all marketing communication.

From this we can see that there are a lot of choices to be made related to the planning and execution of social media marketing. As described in Chapter 2, there are many different social media categories and all these possess their own specific potential and have their own embedded audiences. It can be very challenging to dig into this pile of possibilities to find the best suited social media platforms and understand which communities are the ones you need to be sharing content with. There are also many different tools within specific sites like Facebook that need to be considered.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) advise businesses to choose social media platforms based on the target group and the message that they want to communicate. He also points out that choosing an existing social media application has many benefits when it comes to popularity and user base, but in some cases you may want to create your own application for a specific purpose. Weber (2009) has also written a whole chapter on evaluating platforms in order to learn what each platform is about.

The factor that makes all this so very hard is that the landscape of social media is constantly changing. One concrete example the author noticed while writing this thesis was that in literature before 2010 Myspace is mentioned being the most popular social network, or at least still competing with Facebook, however in the later literature there is no mention of Myspace at all. This is something that can happen with social media when
users shift their interest from one network to another. This does not mean My - space could not still be of use for specific campaigns that are supported by the remaining active user base, but it has lost a lot of its attractiveness over the years. As the first step for digital marketers Weber (2009) encourages them to observe social media and find the most influential places within the social web.

To guide decisions regarding social media campaigns Tuten (2008) has formed a list of questions for social media marketers to understand what they need, in order to find right tools for their campaigns: “Does the culture of social media fit your brand’s positioning or fit with how your brand wishes to be perceived? Do you know where online your customer and prospects are? Are the relevant communities open and welcoming to brand participation? What opportunities exist within each community for brand promotion? Do you have the resources of time and money to commit to the campaign? Do you have a hook, a conversation starter, a point of engagement – something that will inspire interaction with your brand? Are you willing to take risks?” (Tuten, 2008, p. 27).

Unfortunately there were no articles to be found on the topic of social media management tools, despite there being many such tools available on the market, both free and paid. The main benefits of these software tools are reduced time and effort by posting to multiple platforms simultaneously, allowing quick response to customer inquiries, reducing duplicate efforts through collaboration by multiple users. They also help in finding topics, content, and contacts on social channels to share and enhance engagement and allow scheduling of posts for around-the-clock engagement without manual effort. Some of the best reviewed tools are Hootsuite, TweetDeck, Sprout and Social Studio. (G2 crowd, 2015.)

3.2.3 What is the right way to engage people in social media?

When the most promising social media platforms have been chosen companies should carefully plan the communication on these platforms. On a general level Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) provide some good principles about being social. First principle is to be active, take part in discussion and share with the community, as said earlier about blogs, you need to actively take part and commit to your efforts in order to keep audience attention. Secondly you should also understand the nature of the channels by being interesting with your content, being humble about your position in the channels and by behaving “informally” when you approach other users and are aiming to blend in. Use judgement however, in a social network like LinkedIn it may still be wise to keep the communication professional. Last principle is to be honest. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010.)

Engagement should also be considered on a campaign level. Remember the objectives of the campaign and determine which channels, tactics and tools within would best to achieving the desirable engagement from your audience (Tuten, 2008). If you wish to expand your audience on a social network, maybe use Facebook for a Like & Share-lottery. On an occasion when you need some input from your customer base, you can throw a more creative type of contest maybe asking for pictures or video clips of customers using your product or enjoying your service. If you know the high value of your product, maybe even consider giving chance for people to review it.

As mentioned earlier it is good for a business to know where the discussions of certain topics are hot and to use these spots for engagement (Li et al., 2011; Yeoman, 2014). Here we get back to the topic of blog influencers that businesses can use when trying to get better level of engagement from crowds and guiding the discussions.
Blog influencers are nodes in the blogosphere that have a high influential value in based on network, content and activeness factors. These nodes are good entry points for marketers to launch their strategies, enhancing effectiveness and availability of blog marketing. (Li et al., 2011) Tuten (2008) describes influencers as follows: “Influencers are people who are seen by others as knowledgeable sources of information with a strong communication network that results in their ability to affect purchase decision for a number of other consumers, directly and indirectly.” (p. 92)

Li et al. (2011) have provided a model for identifying these nodes based on the factors mentioned. See Figure 4. They provide ways to calculate each factor, but simply put the value of a node is the sum of these factors. By using this model marketers can calculate which nodes possess the highest potential for their marketing purposes.

![Marketing Influence Value (MIV) Model](image)

**Figure 4.** Social influence and MIV factors in the blogosphere (Li et al., 2011, p. 5146)

Another similar way for using existing users of social media are so called buzz agents that are recruited for the purpose of talking up a product or service without identifying their connection to the company. (Weber 2009) These methods are worth considering, but it requires some thought how to get these influencers cooperating and also how to recruit suitable buzz agents while trying to be transparent and honest with the audience.

According to Li et al. (2011) content is one factor affecting amount of influence in the case of blogs, this is also very true in all social media communication and the locus of getting the audience to engage with a business/brand. If your content is not getting people interested or encouraging them to interact, you are doing something wrong. It is also
important to think about the ways both customers and noncustomers can interact with the content and how to make them access your content frequently.

Chi (2011) suggests through literature that activity on social networks should be user-centred, not message-centred. This means that companies need to figure out how to spread their message in a new way that at the same time satisfies consumer needs. The company/brand needs to provide the consumers with something that they find valuable, not only spam what they have to offer. The message needs to be embedded in the interactions provided for the audience, it should not be the centre of communication. Drury (2008) supports this idea by saying it is about providing content that customers can relate to and appreciate, not just simple messages.

Companies want people to talk about them, creating buzz that gets them on the map, so businesses need to find the best ways for getting conversations going. When talking about brands you want dialogue between you, your customers and the potential customers. On top of the dialogue brands should also provide them with ways to feel connected to their brand by promoting green values, high end design, or whatever your brand stands for. The stronger the dialogue, the stronger the brand is, and wise versa. (Weber 2009.) Li & Bernoff (2008) have found three key engagement methods for branding. They encourage brands to utilize customer enthusiasm by using reviews and evaluations. Other ways to engage are to establish a community for your customers and also to take part in your fan communities.

Ashley & Tuten (2015) propose that brands could offer engagement experiences in the form of entertainment like a virtual world or a social game. These solutions are good for making consumers to have longer exposure times with the brand message, which in turn may help them connect with a brand. The gaming elements within such methods also allow consumers to get gamified experiences, like rewards, that support their social experience and as they are getting value from the game, they also are more allowing for things like advertising within the entertainment. (Ashley & Tuten, 2015.)

Just getting people talking is good, but it is even better if the dialogue has a more positive tone than a negative one. Weber (2009) claims that brands in the social web need to take things slow at first to limit the loss of control in the social web. The ultimate goal is to have a combination of professional content and customer-generated content, but jumping straight to the latter is not advised. Companies are advised to start with content from employees or experts in a certain area, the first option being least risky. When moving towards allowing customers to openly discuss company products, it is advised that you start with one “good” product and slowly progress towards more risky topics. Weber also mentions that not all comments have to make it through, but moderation should be done to shape the conversation. (Weber, 2009.)

What Weber proposes above can be seen as wise move for protecting brand reputation, but as social media marketing processes mature, brands should shape their communication to be more transparent. As Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) argued businesses need to be honest with their social media activities. There are always risks involved, but being overly cautious and protective may lead to having low impact and rewards. Communities may also prove hostile if a business were to behave badly or dishonestly, like the H&M “trashgate” incident mentioned by Aula (2010). For every business, new phenomenon like social media marketing comes with a learning curve and some mistakes will be made. Companies need to be prepared for these occasions, mitigate the negative impact and make the positive word spread like fire.
### 3.2.4 Social media marketing metrics and education

Drury (2008) states marketers are accountable to their brand and business and their activities need to provide some return on investment (ROI). Social media has brought some great tools for branding and marketing and it has already provided businesses success in social networking, social search and viral campaigns. Clients of marketing professionals however want to see measurable ROI and proof that social media as a channel leads to success and is worth the money spent on it.

Measuring ROI in social media marketing is not an easy task. Opinions about defining ROI metrics are quite divided. There are a lot of lists defining things marketers should follow in their campaigns but the author considers it most important that for each individual campaign there needs to be goals that can be measured and followed. Social media cries for more qualitative measurement as opposed to quantitative measurements of online marketing. However marketers tend to go for tactics that are easily and accurately measurable and do not really mind if they may not be most effective. The reason behind it is simply that marketers are under pressure to measure their performance and to be able to show their results. (Fisher, 2009.)

When talking about measuring social media marketing campaigns there is a divided crowd of research and professionals. It seems that there is no consensus of the role and measurement of ROI in social media marketing, but on the other hand such actions are still expected from any marketer seeking to take use of social media as part of marketing efforts. Spiller & Tuten (2015) say that most marketing professors agree that there are no perfect measures for marketing success, and that digital and social media measurement specifically need a lot of testing before they become successful.

Getting to the root of the problem we need to check back with Leeflang et al. (2014), the challenges, and the solutions that they name to be the keys for solving these challenges of the digital era. The solutions we are taking a look at are: filling the gap between the supply and demand of analytically trained people in marketing “talent gap” and the creation of actionable digital metrics.

The talent gap is what has got researchers worried about the state of marketing education and how well it provides tools for digital marketers. In their editorial paper Crittenden & Crittenden (2015) express their worry for future marketers not getting the right tools from their education to match the changing needs of consumers in the digital environment.

When it comes to measuring marketing campaigns similar concerns arise. Today’s marketers have an advantage to their predecessors when it comes to availability of marketing data, however Spiller & Tuten (2015) question if marketing students are adequately prepared to make use of all this data available. For this marketers should have good capabilities for quantitative analysis and critical thinking, enabling them to make use of the information and guide strategy.

However research has shown requirements for these skills have actually been reduced in education recently. Currently there is very little offering for digital and social marketing courses in marketing curriculums. Such specific courses are either not available at all or they are offered as electives and not included as compulsory topics (Spiller & Tuten, 2015; Munoz & Wood, 2015). Spiller & Tuten (2015) suggest that the most important metrics and concepts of digital marketing and social media marketing should be included in the required courses. They also suggest the use of real-world applications and cases to provide a very practical learning experience. To fill gaps in curriculums they suggest the
use of digital learning opportunities like Hootsuite University providing information on social media analytics or Google Analytics for online tracking measurement.

Spiller & Tuten (2015) also promote the accountability of individuals in marketing education and point out that team projects and cases are not supporting this aspect. They refer to another study by Glenn (2011) implying that in these tasks students are usually able to stick to their comfort zones, skipping important learning for skills like analytical thinking or mathematics.

There are some new experiments in universities for giving students better understanding of what is going on. To provide one example Atwong (2015) has described a project specifically aimed to enhancing student’s social media marketing and analytics skills at the California State University, Fullerton (CSUF). In the first implementation students are promoting CSUF Marketing brand in the social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube) as part of a team. They go through different roles and stages of marketing from planning tasks, goals and strategies, to implementing them, following up, and reflecting on the campaigns afterwards. This is a very practical approach that gives students real life experience and prepares them for their future work. (Atwong, 2015.)

So the educational sector seems to have acknowledged the problem and the issue will most likely be taken into account in the years to come, but it will take time to fill the talent gap in the eyes of companies seeking to find the best individuals for their marketing positions. What this means is that any company looking for professionals to do their marketing should really take a deep look into the prospective employees and what they know, where they studied, and if they have been taught the necessary skills they need in the position one is offering.

One way to learn social media marketing is merely experimenting with the channels like most businesses were doing in the study by Lagrosen & Grunden (2014) on wellness industry, but if you cannot afford a long learning curve and you have much to lose in terms of reputation, it is better to find professionals with experience and the right skillset.

When it comes to metrics in social media marketing it seems the best way to approach measurement is on a campaign basis. Tuten (2008) provides six steps for the process. The process starts with the campaign objectives, then the strategy components of the campaign need to be mapped. For each objective of the campaign, criteria of achievement will need to be determined, and also the tools needed to measure these criteria. Then you need to set a baseline that you can measure against. Results need to be analysed for all components and changes made according to the results. Last step is simply to keep measuring. (Tuten, 2008.)

There is a plethora of lists for measuring social media marketing, but every business need to find their own way of doing it. It will take time and iteration to find the best practices just for you. To provide a simple starting point there is a comprehensive list of digital and social media metrics introduced in the article by Spiller & Tuten (2015). This list provides a good idea of what all the possible points of data are that can be extracted from the vast world of social media in the categories of activity, interaction and return. See Table 3.
To shed some more concrete light on what measuring in social media can be, we can look at what a specific platform — Facebook in this case — offers in terms of data and following up activities within the platform. Starting with a Facebook page you can get number of page views, number of unique users, number of wall posts (how involved are people), discussion topics, number of reviews, if they are in use on your page, photo views and video plays. You can also get data from your ads. For each ad marketer can see the ad name, how much CPC (cost-per-click)/CPM (cost-per-thousand impression) you have bid on the ad, Type (CPC or CPM), Imp = number of times ad has been displayed (impressions), Number of clicks, CTR (click through rate) = How many clicks on times of displays, average cost, and amount of money spent. Marketers can use this information to improve their activities, test new things and follow if their numbers improve. (Holzner, 2009.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplar measures</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Number, frequency, and recency of Blog posts, Updates/posts, Comments/reply comments, White papers, Photo posts, Video posts, Tweets, Pins, Tags</td>
<td>Measures of the input the brand is making into developing a digital/social presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Number, frequency, and recency of Registrations, Bookmarks/favorites/likes/ratings, Comments/posts/mentions/tags, Links/backlinks, Downloads/installations/embeds, Subscriptions, Fans/followers/friends, Share/forward/distribute/refer, Reviews/testimonials, Traffic/visits/views/impresseions, Time spent on site, Profile development, User-generated content contributed, Discount/deal redemption rate, Echo effect/virality, Sentiment</td>
<td>Measures of customer engagement with the brand’s digital and social presence; indicators suggest various forms of response from the target audience; beyond basic responsiveness, indicators may also suggest influence beyond the initial target audience to customers’ social graph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td>Cost/prospects, Lead conversion rate, Average new revenue per customer, Customer lifetime value, Earned media values, Shifts in average sales/site traffic/search engine ratings, Share of voice, Return on investment</td>
<td>Measures indicate the outcome of the digital and social strategies and tactics and illustrate the financial value of the actions taken</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Digital and Social Media Metrics (Spiller & Tuten (2015), p. 116)
### Challenge description | Findings from literature | Reference
--- | --- | ---
**How to manage brand health and reputation?** | Companies should have a social media policy available for all employees to protect their reputation. Employees should receive training to help them understand good social media practices. | Hutchings (2012), Weber (2009) Weber (2009)

**Social media strategy and tactics.** | Companies should choose social media platforms based on the target group and the message that they want to communicate. Aligning activities between channels and integration of channels both social media and traditional is advised. Observe social media and find the most influential places within the social web. | Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) Weber (2009)

**How to engage people in social media?** | Engaging in social media needs to be active to keep up the interest of followers, it is important to respond to interaction and not only push your own content. The content in social media should be something that customers can relate to and appreciate/value, not just simple messages. Use of blog influencers/buzz agents is one way to engage the audience. Be active, be interesting, be humble, be unprofessional, and be honest. | Singh et al. (2008) Chi (2011); Drury (2008) Li & al. (2011), Weber (2009) Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)

**Measuring social media.** | Measuring ROI in social media marketing is hard. Campaigns should be set measurable goals and followed closely. Social media needs qualitative measurement rather than quantitative. | Fisher (2009)

**Social media education** | Today’s marketers have a lot of marketing data available to them, but marketers should have good capabilities for quantitative analysis and critical thinking, enabling them to make use of the information and guide strategy. Marketing education is lacking in the area of social media and digital marketing, especially as compulsory courses. | Spiller & Tuten (2015) Spiller & Tuten (2015); Munoz & Wood (2015)

*Table 4* Challenges and solutions of social media marketing found in the literature.

Table 4 covers the main findings regarding the possible challenges companies may face when engaging in social media and how to overcome them.

### 3.3 Summary

In this chapter the author covered both the positive and negative effects social media marketing can have on companies as they start using it as part of their marketing efforts. In the beginning of the chapter some statistics were introduced about how much we use social media today and in what ways today’s marketers are engaging us within, to show how important social media has grown to be. Afterwards the biggest drivers and benefits of using social media as marketing channel and how companies can make most use of the channel were discussed. Lastly a closer look was taken at the main challenges related to adopting social media as a marketing tool arising from the literature and given guidance was given on how to overcome these challenges, and also how to mitigate related risks in case they go off.
4. Research method

In this chapter the author will represent the research method chosen for this study on social media marketing, the motivation behind choosing this specific research method and lastly explaining the data collection process and implementation of the study conducted for the purpose of this master’s thesis.

4.1 Why case study research?

There were many ways to conduct research on the phenomenon called social media marketing, but the most viable options in the authors mind were between a qualitative case study and a quantitative survey that would be directed towards companies. However on a personal interest level there was much more value seen on the qualitative method because of the aim of this study. The author wanted to find out on a practical level how companies are conducting their marketing and especially their social media marketing to help other companies do better in this field. A survey could have provided this information on some level, but a case study research seemed far superior with getting more detailed information for analysis purposes, although this meant the number of companies under study would be much smaller. Another problem with a survey for companies would have been the uncertainty of the number of responses. The lack of fresh qualitative research in literature review on the topic was another big reason behind choosing this path.

The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, international relations, and the maturation of industries. (Yin, 2014, p.2)

According to Yin (2014) doing case study research would be the preferred method compared to the others in situations when the following three conditions are met: first the main research questions are “how” or “why” questions, second a researcher has little or no control over behavioral events and third the study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon.

With case study research the author was able to target a desired group of companies that would suit very specific needs and help fill the gaps found during literature review. With a survey it would have been unsure how many companies would have got interested, which could have led to vague results. With case study research it was more likely to reach an adequate number of companies to take part in the research. By going into companies to interview the people responsible of marketing an interviewer is able to see inside a specific phenomenon inside an organization through concrete explanations of processes and examples of real life events within a business. The idea of interviewing the actual people conducting marketing efforts in companies was something the author was very interested in doing, not only to get good practical data for research purposes, but also to learn and develop the skills required. It was not the easiest way to do research, but in the end it proved to be a very interesting way of gathering material.
4.2 Case study research and interviewing

As a research method, the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena (Yin, 2003). There have been numerous case study works lately in the field of business and international business (Yin, 2014). Below are three different definitions of case study research that are all accurate in their own way in the eyes of the author, however the most comprehensive one is provided by Yin (2014).

Yin (2014) provides a twofold definition of a case study as follows: a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. A case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and one result, relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. So case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method—covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis, thus it is a comprehensive research strategy.

*The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result.*

(Schramm, 1971 as cited by Yin, 2003, p. 12)

Case study research is detailed, intensive information about a single case or a small group of related cases. Typical characteristics: a single case, situation or a set of cases is chosen; individual, group or community as the object of study; points of interest are usually processes, an individual case is studied in connection to its environment (in natural situations) of which the case is part of; data is collected by using multiple different methods e.g. through observations, interviews and studying documents. The goal being usually describing of phenomena. (Hirsjärvi R., Remes P., Sajavaara P., 2013.)

The two other definitions have broken case study into more simple terms. What Schramm says pretty much sums up what the author was willing to find out when he approached the case companies. Hirsjärvi et al. (2013) point out that when conducting a case study one is usually interested in the processes, marketing processes in this case.

There are two types of case study research, there is single case study and there is multiple case study. In this master’s thesis multiple case study was chosen to provide a broader view into the phenomenon of social media marketing across different industries. Therefore replication logic was used with expectations to find similarities within the different cases studied. As similar results are expected we are talking about literal replication. (Yin, 2014.)

Interviews are the main source of data in this master’s thesis. Interviews have both many strengths but also some clear weaknesses. Interviews can be well targeted to focus directly on the topics of a case study and they are insightful as they provide both explanations and the personal views of the interviewee. However interviews can be biased if the questions are not well articulated, responses can be biased and there can be inaccuracies due to poor recall, the interviewee may also reflexively give the interviewer “what he/she wants to hear”. (Yin, 2014, p. 106.)
When conducting the interviews the author was especially paying attention to the weaknesses beforehand to reduce the risk of such occurrences mentioned. There were some, but all in all the author thinks he did a good job not guiding the conversation too much and the interviewees were well prepared to answer the questions asked.

4.3 Data collection and implementation of the case study

When the author started to think about doing master’s thesis about using social media as a marketing tool it was quite natural that the data collection would concentrate to local vicinity. Before starting to write the literature review, after reading a lot about the topic, there was clearly a tendency that earlier research had been concentrating mostly on big brands and corporations. So from the beginning it was decided this thesis would be looking at small and medium sized companies in the area of Oulu, Finland.

![Diagram of case study research process](https://example.com/diagram.png)

Figure 5 Doing case study research: A linear but iterative process (redrawn). (Yin, 2014, p.3)

Above in Figure 5 is the overall process of conducting case study research according to Yin (2014). This was the basis used for this study. In the planning phase it became clear that case study would suit the needs of this study and therefore was selected as the research method.

The design phase was about choosing who were going to be the targets of the study and how many cases should be included. The author decided to approach companies in an attempt to find one individual with sufficient knowledge of all marketing related practices within each company to be interviewed. It was a possibility to fill in small gaps from others, if seen necessary. Eight companies from different industries were approached by email from which five agreed to participate, one declined for good reasons and two did not respond within the timeframe given. All of the five companies were from the Oulu area so interviews were fairly easy to arrange, four of which were held at company locations and one in a public venue. One interview was done in English and the rest in Finnish. Interviews were recorded with a smartphone and the audio files were transcribed later on the author’s computer with a specialized software tool. The interviews lasted as follows: Interview 1 (Company A, 35 minutes), interview 2 (Company B, 52 minutes), interview 3 (Company C, 58 minutes), interview 4 (Company D, 47 minutes) and interview 5 (Company E, 69 minutes). All the interviews were conducted between
February 1<sup>st</sup> and February 16<sup>th</sup> of 2016. The case companies will be further introduced in the beginning of data analysis.

The case companies were chosen based on their size and location, but the most important criteria was that each company should have at least three different social media applications in use. To ensure this the author did a brief feasibility study into each prospect. The final companies to be approached came from the interest of finding diversity within the case companies, so that each company would represent a bit different perspective. This was decided in order to provide a broader insight to the phenomenon. The set of case companies that responded their willingness had two medium sized companies and three small companies, all from different industries. One company was clearly B2B with international viewpoint, there were three service oriented companies (a hotel, a restaurant and a sports equipment retailer) and one small brewery. The ones that were approached but did not respond and the one that was not able to participate would have represented other industries and brought more global perspective to the table.

Semi-structured interview was the basis of each interview with four main themes: company background, marketing channels and processes, social media marketing benefits and social media marketing challenges. All these themes had a set of questions related to them covering the points of interest arising from the literature review. The overall structure of the interview can be found in Appendix A.

Before each interview the author checked the online content to be found from home pages and different social media sources to prepare for the interview in order to cover as much ground as possible. After each interview the arising new points of interest or problematic deployment of questions were taken into account and the structure was revised for the interviews coming up. A couple of new sub questions were added and the viewpoint of international business was introduced to be applied on cases that had such activities.

4.4 Data analysis

The interview structure was built around the themes that seemed most important in the literature review. The author aimed to add at least one question related to each part of literature review in order to compare those findings against the empirical findings. Some themes got more attention than others simply for the fact the author did not want the interview length to get out of hand.

When starting to analyse the transcribed interviews the author divided the interview questions under smaller topics. Then all interesting data fitting under each topic was extracted and written down for each case company. The most descriptive name for this process is topical analysis. There was a lot of need for compressing the data for each case company as the transcriptions were so extensive.

There were some inconsistencies between interviews because on a few occasions the structure of interview changed a little and finding the data from those “miss steps” was harder to spot, but in the end the author feels that the most important data was extracted from each interview for each topic under analysis. After initial analysis was complete the case companies had a chance to read it and the author revised according to the feedback.

After the cases had first been analysed individually the findings were concluded in the end of each topic. The last thing to do was to compare the findings made in the analysis between the individual cases and to the ones found in the literature review phase, this will be done in the Discussion part (Chapter 6).
5. Research findings and analysis

In this chapter the author presents the findings from all the case study interviews. The analysis has been divided into six themes and all the case study companies are described in each theme. The themes are company background and marketing process, marketing strategy and the role of social media in it, social media channels and how they are used, social media benefits and motivation for using it, social media challenges and goals for near future. There are some summarizations used to make more sense of the data that will be used later in the discussion part.

5.1 Company background and marketing process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Company A</th>
<th>Company B</th>
<th>Company C</th>
<th>Company D</th>
<th>Company E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees / marketing employees</td>
<td>7 / 1</td>
<td>20 / 1</td>
<td>3 / 3</td>
<td>50 / 1</td>
<td>3 / 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee position</td>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Marketing manager</td>
<td>All around</td>
<td>General manager</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee experience in the company</td>
<td>Almost two years</td>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>Almost two years</td>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>More than five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Service industry / Restaurant</td>
<td>High tech equipment for companies</td>
<td>Small brewery industry</td>
<td>Travelling / accommodation / restaurant industry</td>
<td>Sports equipment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5** Case companies background information.

In Table 5 the author has summarized the main background information about the case companies. Company A is a small company in the service industry. It is a bar/restaurant that is focused on providing their customers with best possible customer service and a unique atmosphere that makes customers feel like being at home, feel appreciated, and allows them to meet new people and network while relaxing. To accomplish this they provide food, drinks and different kinds of activities like pool, board games and entertainment.

With Company A Interviewee 1 makes all marketing related decisions by himself, but uses the staff to do marketing activities when seen fit. All employees are kept up to date of what is going on in the company so they can spread the word through their customers while serving them. They are well focused on word of mouth marketing and social media helps them spread the word around, but what happens inside the business is seen as most important by the interviewee. Employees also prepare updates to social media channels when the content is something they are passionate about and have good knowledge of.
Company B is a fast growing B2B company that provides their customers with highly technical solutions in a customer centric way. They aim to provide each customer better solutions than the ones they are using or what their competition is offering. They want to provide the best solutions in their niche industry. At the time of the interview Company B had 20 people working for them in three different countries, but they were prospecting other interesting countries as new markets. 16 of the employees were working at the company headquarters and there is one full time employee working with marketing related matters (Interviewee 2). At the time of interview she had two students temporarily helping out with certain marketing related tasks.

As the marketing manager Interviewee 2 had a lot of power regarding marketing related decisions. The CEO of Company B is the one she answers to and checks with about the larger marketing matters, but according to her it is more of a formality and that her expertise is highly trusted. When in need of secondary opinion she turns to the company development manager. She works very closely with the sales personnel, R&D and production because they are selling to companies and need to work closely together to reach and serve their customers in the best possible manner. This is important because the marketing manager is not in direct contact with the customers, but still needs to know what the customers need and value.

Company C is a small brewery of three enthusiastic partners who have been conducting their business in parallel with other activities and none are yet working full time with the company. All partners are beer enthusiasts and home brewing enthusiasts. Company C tries to bring some new elements to the Finnish beer culture that are already common in other parts of Europe. They are brewing new batches each time and have no constant products, which is a unique approach in the Finnish small brewing industry. They want to shape the Finnish beer culture in a way that people would be more eager to try new beers and tastes. At the time of interview they were only selling to bars and restaurants for the lack of bottling equipment, but may start selling to retailers in the future. “We aim to produce high quality beers that are as versatile as possible and have this kind of strong taste in them.”

They all take part in all the processes related to running the brewery from manufacturing to marketing and they work in tight co-operation so there is a mutual understanding for each matter and how it is to be handled. As an example Interviewee 3 told that when they do a post into social media one person forms the initial draft and that is circulated in email so that others can comment and make changes. When all three are happy with the post it is released.

Company D is a hotel that is part of larger Finnish hotel chain. The chain aims that the hotels within are “More than a hotel”. This is achieved by offering special experiences through their partner network and by representing a special theme that is present in their food offering and interior design, so the chain aims to provide some unique selling points in order to cope with competition. In addition to accommodation services the unit under interview in Oulu is offering their customers premium class food services and hosting many kinds of events, parties, celebrations and such. They have 160 rooms available and almost 150 restaurant seats, there is a separate venue for arranging events included in their business.

The hotel locally employs around 50 people. Interviewee 4 is the general manager of the unit and he is solely responsible for marketing efforts within the hotel, but he gets help from chain marketing where there are two marketing specialists providing help to all the hotel units. The CEO of the chain makes decisions on the general alignment of marketing
activities, media agencies and marketing design agencies may provide some recommendations. The general managers of each unit make their own marketing planning and the planning is done for the whole financial year, where the annual marketing clock includes e.g. all major product launches that have been planned well before the actual launch. Employees are instructed to make updates about the hotel when possible, but it is not expected of them. Interviewee 4 as the general manager of the unit makes all social media updates by himself.

Company E is a small business that sells sports equipment for sport enthusiasts, additionally they sell sport hobby places for municipalities and the private sector. Even further they provide training, coaching or courses according to client needs. They sell equipment through their online store and they have one physical store at the time of interview, they might be expanding in the future.

The company employs three people full time and during summer season they employ additional people to match seasonal demand. Interviewee 5 who can be titled as the CEO of the company has the biggest responsibility of marketing related decision making. Sometimes he needs to ask for a second opinion, input or additional help from his business associate. He describes the process to be very fast sometimes even impulsive. He can make the decisions quite autonomic, but if it is a matter relating to a major campaign in radio/TV or similar then they take their time together to think through if it is worth it.

To conclude this part we could say there is one clear B2B company (Company B) within the five companies interviewed and the others also have some amount of B2B elements, especially company D. Companies B and D are clearly the medium sized firms in the mix and have more layers within the organizations, but overall it seems that all the companies have very agile approach to marketing and they are able to make marketing decisions quickly when necessary. There seems to be bit more long term planning from the bigger companies (B & D). Only company B uses a full time employee that is solely concentrated on marketing. Marketing efforts in all the case companies are concentrated in the hands of very few people and when asked if there have been any problems integrating and executing their marketing efforts, there were really not that many to be found. The few problems related to managing social media communication in the case companies will be introduced in the challenges part (5.5.3).

### 5.2 Marketing strategy and role of social media within

In this part the author will explain the different marketing strategies used by each case company under interview in this thesis and try to define the role of social media in each company according to the interviews. Additionally the use of outsourcing regarding marketing processes for each company will be explained briefly.

#### 5.2.1 Marketing strategies

Company A’s marketing strategy is strongly built around word of mouth communication and internal marketing. The reasoning for this according to Interviewee 1 is as follows: “Well, because Finland is a difficult place in terms of marketing and of advertising of alcohol and things like that, so basically most of marketing is based on like word of mouth and internal marketing. Basically our bartenders need to know everything that is going on in the bar and that they advise the customer when they come and telling them what is coming up in the restaurant and what is new and so on.” Company A uses social media as a tool to support this word of mouth electronically and spread the word much further through the networks of users.
Traditional media in the form of newspapers has been tested in marketing by Company A to market their ability for arranging small parties for companies and communities. He explains: “It was like a campaign like during the pikkujoulu-season, because we have such a good venue and all this place here that can be privatized, so we had several pikkujoulu here and at six o’clock this area was reserved for companies.” However using newspapers is not something they do all the time mainly because it is not a good way for reaching their main target audience, but for such special occasion it was a useful marketing option.

As already mentioned earlier company B is a solution oriented B2B company where the marketing efforts happen in close co-operation between different processes. Quote from Interviewee 2: “For I am not directly in the customer interface I work closely with our sales people to understand what the customers want. We are a solution oriented company so we want to solve the problems our customers are facing. We find cheaper and better solutions for them to replace their outdated methods. To achieve this we work on individual customer cases to offer solutions to each specific situation.” They are using some of their customers as reference cases in order to build their image and brand as a trusted supplier which is one of the main goals of social media marketing efforts. So they are focusing on building their trustworthiness, their name and reputation as a solid supplier. This all should lower the entry barrier and encourage others to start doing business with them. Brand building is important and they aim to be the best supplier in their market in every possible way. At the time of the interview they were in the position of a market leader. Interviewee 2 describes how they want to brand themselves: “We try to do everything little better than our competitors, if the competition offers solution that can do this one thing for a prospect, we ask the customer if they need something else on the side for extra benefit.” Being a B2B company the most important job for sales and marketing is lead generation.

Digital marketing including social media marketing is one of the two main marketing methods of company B the other one being event marketing. They try to take part in two trade shows in Finland annually where they have a stand, usually one in spring and another in autumn. The annual marketing clock is built around these events. They bring some new device or application to these events. They do pre-event marketing in couple of industry publications that they switch between and they do after-marketing when the event has passed for maximum effect. The company has frequently raised interest from different media and has got free publicity this way that they later use in their own social media channels.

Company C claims they have been working in an ad hoc fashion when it comes to marketing and strategy. They have quite a modern way of approaching business both in their offering and in reaching out to their audience. According to Interviewee 3 the Finnish beer culture is not as well developed as it is in some other parts of Europe, but interest is growing along with the potential customer base they target. The demand for their products has been high despite the fact they are a young company, it seems there has been demand for local beer that they have conveniently entered to fill. They are selling to bars and restaurants, but they need to reach the customers that will eventually be drinking their beers in these venues and have found social media to be the best and fastest way to inform their audience what the new batches of beer will be like and when they will be available at the restaurants. Their interest towards focusing on social media marketing arouse from following their competition, quote from Interviewee 3: “We saw that our competitors are doing a poor job with social media, we decided from the beginning to be frequent with our communication whatever the content, we follow up each post, we
improve to make sure the it engages the audience and that we keep gaining more followers in our channels."

When it comes to traditional forms of media, company C has done some radio marketing, and as they are still fresh and interesting, many newspapers have been willing to write a lot about them. They have taken part into several sports events for marketing purpose not only to buff their products and support the events, but also to take part into the action themselves. "We want our brand to be associated with positive things and when we sponsor an event we appreciate, we also put ourselves on the line to show our full support towards the event." This way they can show that they are actually interested in the event/sport and want to support this type of healthy life style. They want to show that an interest in beer is not a bad thing, but a hobby amongst others and that there is no need to demonize such culture like it usually goes in Finland. The atmosphere in other parts of Europe is much more understanding and they want to drive similar culture in Finland.

The general manager of company D splits their trade in two separate categories. Half of their business comes from leisure travel and the other half from business travel. They need to cover both these target groups with their marketing. Quote from Interviewee 4: "We are a city hotel for adult taste, affordable luxury is a theme closely related to our business, we offer small luxury that is not too expensive for anyone." For leisure travellers they are a good pit stop for people travelling to Lapland and they can work in co-operation with those hotels to provide customers with suitable packages. For business travel they offer a place to spend a night after meetings and move on the next morning. They take part in travel trade fairs to approach the individual travellers and conference trade fair to appear as a solid venue option in the Oulu area for organising meetings. They advertise actively in the local radio, they provide a newsletter and have produced a TV commercial that will be used some time in the future. They use newspaper marketing in free deliveries locally in Oulu, this is mainly focused around marketing their food services and event arrangement capabilities for local people rarely need to overnight in a hotel. Press releases are another important part of their marketing.

Interviewee 5 form company E said that their company had little marketing experience from the very beginning and that for this reason their marketing efforts have been quite a mix over the years. However they have concentrated more on building their brand about the feeling for what they are about and less on specific products or campaigns. Those are important as well, but they want to provide their audience more than just those single promotions and campaigns. One way to spread their "feeling" in Interviewee 5’s words goes as follows: "We use our sponsored athletes to our advantage by selecting the inspiring positive characters so that everyone they cross paths with are left with this feeling ‘Those guys with a shirt like that, how cool were they!’". This positive and relaxed feeling is what they want to spread in their marketing efforts across different channels.

From traditional media formats company E has been using radio campaigns and even had their own short program on the local radio, however they have not used radio for a couple of years now. They have had some indirect coverage in national TV through one of their team members. Company E has found that radio and TV programs are not that easy channels because one cannot directly advertise, but it has to be much more subtle and happen according to the rules of the channel. Local newspaper has been used very rarely, maybe once a year according to Interviewee 5, so all in all they do not use traditional channels actively.

In conclusion there are a variety of very different strategies to be found within the case companies, some have very well thought out strategies, while others have been working
their way through trial and error, testing new ideas as they come. Differentiation strategy seems to be most dominant amongst the case companies, but Company B is going for the market leader strategy. It can already be seen that the use of traditional media within the case companies is concentrated around special occasions and is otherwise occasional at best. Company D seems to be the only one that uses radio and newspapers more consistently while others are concentrating their continuous efforts in the digital channels. The role of social media within the strategies will be discussed in more detail next.

5.2.2 Role of social media in marketing strategies

The CEO of Company A states that overall social media is their main marketing channel at the time of the interview. The role of social media in their marketing strategy is to support the actions taken in the servicing of customers and boosting the message through the social media channels. They cannot reach everyone in the venue, so it is about educating the big audience about the concept of the restaurant and what the audience can do as customers. However when it comes to marketing alcohol social media is not the best tool according to Interviewee 1, regarding this aspect he says: “I think in Finland the main thing is like indoor marketing, communicating inside the restaurant.”

For Company B the role of social media in the company’s marketing efforts is said to be rather small. Interviewee 2 says the role is small in Finland and little more important in the USA. She says: “Social media is basically about the branding and building good reputation, while lead generation is in much bigger role and that we use much more time on. It is important that people know you, but this is business.” They find social media to be important and something that needs to be addressed and developed as a part of their marketing, but in comparison to other marketing efforts it is found less important.

Interviewee 3 on the other hand states that for Company C social media is the most important marketing channel and it is also the channel where they can follow closely their competition and their relation to these competitors. Social media allows the brewery to effectively reach out to the most active followers that are fond of their products and inform them when and where the next batches of beer will be available. “This is something we could not achieve with any other means of marketing communication.”

When asked about the role of social media as part of other marketing efforts the general manager of Company D went very deep into the new age of purchasing goods and services. According to him it is crucial for every business today to have all the material related to the business and offerings available for the potential customers. Unlike some ten years ago, customers are now able to do comparisons between offerings well before hand, and if the material is not available for individual consumers and businesses you are immediately left out of the equation. “For this reason the more transparent you are, the more direct and honest feedback you allow about your product offerings visible to the consumers, the easier it is for them to make the purchasing decision.” By providing this information digitally and in social media one can get into the purchasing processes and steer the purchasing decisions of consumers which directly affects the profitability of one’s business. He did not say how important social media is in comparison to other marketing, but emphasized its crucial role in bringing people information about their business and offerings. He clearly states that the more you give and allow information about your service, the more transparent and trustworthy your business becomes in the eyes of a consumer.

Company E ranks social media high in their marketing mix, in his personal opinion Interviewee 5 says that the role is very significant, even 75% of their efforts. He says that
the sportsmen and women that they target are not easily reachable by means of
traditional media as the type of sport they have built their business around is so new, fast
growing and trendy itself. However he also states the following: “As the number of people
around the sport has been expanding fast and new competitors are entering the market it
may be time to consider targeting smaller segments that are maybe more reachable in the
means of traditional media.” It seems that their initial strategy is still strongly in use
which may not be the best fit for the current situation and if so, it needs to be updated.

Social media as a marketing channel is considered to have big impact by most of the case
companies, only the representative of Company B states that in their business the role is
minor compared to other marketing efforts they do. Interviewee 1 from Company A says
social media can support the marketing that happens within business hours and it is what
they mainly use to inform and educate their audience when they are not open. Interviewee
4 says every business needs to be “available” to their customers and potential customers
in the digital channels including social media and give them as much information as
possible to be successful. Company C has built its marketing very strongly around social
media and use it to effectively reach out to their audience. This also applies to Company
E that finds social media to be the most important marketing channel for the company.

5.2.3 Use of outside help

Company A uses an agency, but it happens to be one of the CEO’s own companies so as
he says: “It’s external, but internal.” Interviewee 3 from Company C says they were
talking about outsourcing their social media activities and even made some contacts,
however it never happened. They kept on doing it themselves, have seen their own system
works and they have adequate time for it. They have a very capable artist in their company
which helps a lot when designing visual material for marketing purposes like tap art and
labels to represent each of their beers. Company E is very independent and capable in
their marketing efforts, they do not use any outside help as they are very innovative and
can do everything from newspaper ads and social media activities to video promotions by
themselves. They even have their own studio for filming all kinds of content. Even if a
newspaper would offer to do an ad for them, they would rather ask for specification and
make it themselves. So these three are all doing their marketing internally.

Company B has been using an advertising agency actively until Interviewee 2 came in to
the company as the marketing manager. Since then they have only occasionally been
exchanging email, mostly when there has been something on their website to be changed.
They have used outside help for a few promotional videos and have plans to utilize this
relationship also in the future. Company D does a lot of their marketing internally, but for
some large scale launches and other larger projects they use a media agency. They have
a “hotel” for all their printable media from business cards to newspaper ads, so it is
available for them anytime they need to use something from there. Similar to Company
B they use professionals when producing videos for YouTube.

Two out of the five companies are using outside help, but it is mostly used for specific
purposes and none of the companies say they are letting an outsider do their social media
communication, but it is something they all are doing internally.

5.3 Social media channels and how they are used

In this part of the analysis the author will go through the data regarding different social
media channels used by the case companies thematically. First the channels will be
introduced, each company had their main social media channels and some that were less
used or were on hold for future use. Some companies were able to raise certain channels above others and these will be reported with arguments. Use of paid social media in forms of additional visibility in the channel will be briefly addressed. Secondly the reasons for choosing the specific channels are introduced on behalf of each company. Lastly the communication style for each company is introduced along with the target frequency of communication and time used of social media marketing.

### 5.3.1 Social media channels and paid use of paid social media

Company A is focusing their social media marketing efforts on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Interviewee 1 says that they also have Twitter but that they have not been using it actively. They have been doing some paid advertisement of Facebook, but it has only been for testing purposes and Interviewee 1 is wondering if it is worth the money. When asked about the most important channel he first hesitated stating that there is not one channel to be named most important, but that they are complementary to each other. However he says if he needed to choose one, it would be Facebook, because it has become: "A part of people’s pattern of thinking, if I want to know something about something, I’m going to check their Facebook page for this information.” On the contrary, in terms of return on investment he says Facebook is not that good because it is hard to target the people you want to.

Company B is in one way little different from the other companies. They have four active channels Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, they do not have these kind of secondary channels, but were fully concentrating on these four at the time of interview. When asked if one channel is more important than another Interviewee 2 was reluctant to do so. She said she cannot raise one above others, but that they all serve a specific purpose. When asked if they use paid advertising in social media, she said they are planning an ad on LinkedIn to target specific small segments and said they have already used it for job ads. On the other hand she says advertising on Facebook is something that they have talked about, but have come to a conclusion that it would most likely not be beneficial for their business. As a possible channel in the future she mentions they have considered Instagram, but that it is too similar to Facebook and for that reason it has not yet been utilized. She says: “Social media needs a designated person, when you go to a social media channel you need to be active there and as I am the one doing it, a new channel is always extra work and one needs to think where ones time is best used at.”

Company C is focusing hard on their Facebook marketing and additionally posting updates to Twitter. Facebook is most easily modified to their needs while Twitter is a bit different. Instagram is something they have been considering, but similarly to Company B they have not seen they would greatly benefit from its use. Then there are two services RateBeer and Untappd that are designed for beer enthusiasts to review the beers they have tasted or use the database when pondering between choices to see the scores of these beers. They have been using these as enthusiasts before, but now they have a business profile where they can add their new products and their labels. They have been working on a LinkedIn profile and have one short video on YouTube, these can be seen as secondary channels at the time of interview. YouTube is something they have started to further think about with new ideas for videos to be made in the future. Interviewee 3 says Facebook is the most important channel for them because it is the most versatile and they have their follower base there which is why they concentrate on that. They have used paid ads on Facebook a few times, but have found it is not that effective and so will only consider it under specific circumstances.
Facebook and Instagram are most actively used channels by Company D. They are becoming more active on Twitter and Interviewee 4 says YouTube is essential for them. They have done one broadcast with periscope and are interested in using it more in the future. The hotel chain has more blog production that is laid down to the hotel units and occasionally they raise some local interest points that they produce themselves. They have a business profile on TripAdvisor and use booking channels like booking.com and hotels.com, that are more like selling channels but have a lot of communal features. They provide basic information of the hotel at Google+. Interviewee 4 considers Facebook to be the most important social media channel in their mix, although TripAdvisor and Booking.com are also very important. When asked about paid advertisement he said they are actively advertising through Facebook, but not yet on other channels.

Interviewee 5 from Company E uses a buffer when doing social media marketing which allows him to choose the different channels where he wants a certain post to go. Facebook and Instagram are the most used channels in their mix, Twitter is little bit less used and they also post to LinkedIn when the content fits there. Additionally they have an active YouTube channel and Google+ profile. They have some internal blog production, mainly through their sponsored team members that are encouraged to engage in social media and sharing about the sport casually with an Instagram photo or such. Company E uses a lot of money on google marketing, but on social media they use paid ads only on Facebook. Facebook and Instagram are the most important social media channels for Company E according to Interviewee 5. For future channels he expects channels like Snapchat and Periscope to take over with popularity which they will need to adapt to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case company</th>
<th>Main social media channels</th>
<th>Secondary / rising channels</th>
<th>Most important channels</th>
<th>Future channel</th>
<th>Paid social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company A</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, YouTube</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>They are complementary, but Facebook is the go to for people in general</td>
<td></td>
<td>They have tried Facebook ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company B</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube</td>
<td></td>
<td>All serve their purpose so cannot say which is most important</td>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>LinkedIn ad and job ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter, RateBeer, Untappd</td>
<td>YouTube, LinkedIn</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
<td>They have tried Facebook ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company D</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, TripAdvisor</td>
<td>Periscope, Google+, Booking sites, Blogging</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>They will concentrate on Twitter and LinkedIn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company E</td>
<td>Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs (team)</td>
<td>Snapchat, Google+</td>
<td>Facebook &amp; Instagram</td>
<td>Periscope, Snapchat</td>
<td>Adwords, Facebook ads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6* Social media channels used by the case companies.
In Table 6 you can see a compendium of the main points of data related to social media channels used in the different case companies. Some channels are in more active use while others may be only for having a presence in the media.

The main channels for all case companies seem to be very similar, what stands out is that Twitter and LinkedIn are more important to the B2B companies B and D. It was a bit surprising that none of the companies do actual blogging frequently. Companies C and D have some industry specific social media services that they can use to help their marketing. Facebook is considered the most important social media channel on average. The paid advertising opportunities of social media are mostly used occasionally at the time of the interviews, only Company D uses Facebook ads regularly.

5.3.2 Why these channels?

When asked how they have ended up with their channels CEO of Company A says those are channels that are most popular and have the most active users. Another important thing is that these channels were something he had time for. He says Facebook is something he uses in normal life while Instagram was something he was not used to, but learned to use when he started the business. “On social media it has to be a life style, it has to be like natural in as sense it is part of your daily life, telling what is going on and stuff like that.” He says those channels you use naturally are easy, but channels that you do not use naturally like Twitter for him, will require extra work. So for him the choice of channels comes from lifestyle and he mentioned it being a matter of generation in a sense too. Similarly, as mentioned earlier he uses his staff to communicate about matters he is not that familiar with. When talking about Facebook marketing he came to a conclusion that it is best used for event marketing.

Marketing manager of Company B says YouTube is a channel that they started using because of pressure from their clients to see videos of their equipment in use, and that now she can easily link the videos for the clients when necessary, she would not let go of YouTube if there was no other solution to replace it. Facebook is the most used social media in Finland and therefore it offers good visibility for the company and they have an active follower base. Twitter is important for them because it is very popular in the US where they have expanded to. They have separate Twitter accounts for the Finnish company and the subsidiary overseas. LinkedIn is an obvious choice when doing B2B marketing because the business managers they are trying to reach can more likely be found there.

Facebook was important channel for Company C because they found it to be the best way of reaching their potential customers efficiently. Twitter serves similar purpose, but they do not make the content as polished there because of the restrictions of the channel. RateBeer and Untappd are very good feedback channels, they can see how people have liked their different products and take the feedback under consideration. RateBeer is a very heavy reviewing application for the “hardcore” beer enthusiasts, while Untappd is something anyone can easily use to review the beers they have tasted.

TripAdvisor and Booking.com are channels that are purely about recommendations for the benefit of the hotel. Interviewee 4 mentioned “the jungle drum” more than once during the interview which according to him is an essential part of marketing today. The people who have experienced their service can leave feedback for other users to see, and good feedback and recommendations encourage others to use their service. Facebook is a good two way channel for communicating with potential guests and people from the city. It helps with simple communication between vacation travellers when they need
information on matters like: When to book a reservation to the restaurant? When is the sauna open? Can I bring a pet? Instagram is aimed at different target group; it is more for international travel. On Instagram they do updates in English, as opposed to Facebook where they use Finnish. On Facebook they intentionally avoid use of hashtags, while on Instagram they use them intensively. Twitter and LinkedIn are channels for business influence that they were using less at the time of interview, but will start actively building on in the near future.

Facebook is important for Company E because it is so popular and they have used it for a long time gathering followers. Instagram is another important channel for them. Interviewee 5 says: “Instagram is a good channel because it gives you global coverage fast even if you don’t have that many followers, but know how to use the right hashtags like famous players or famous companies with a lot of followers.” At first he said they do not target different groups with different channels, but later he said that Instagram is maybe more towards the younger generations and Facebook for a wider reach. With Instagram they want to provide their followers good moments to build up the feeling of the brand through their sponsored team. Instagram has the upside of serving all followers with the content they post, while with Facebook you need to use money for better reach. He states LinkedIn and snapchat are more like waiting for the right moment to be utilized further as you never know what channel will be the next to break big.

All in all it seems that the case companies have thoroughly investigated which channels would best serve their business goals and fit their personal communication style. All companies are closely following the scene of social media to stay on track of the fast changes in the field. For example Interviewee 5 from Company E had like all possible social media applications in his phone. On the other hand the marketing manager of Company B told she has done the research on the different channels, but they concentrate fully on the ones they have chosen as they do not have any secondary channels like the other companies. The people interviewed have kind of grown into a channel like Facebook because they know it from personal life, while for some of them, the newer channels like Instagram and Snapchat are hard because they do not feel comfortable using them. Like Interviewee 1 says: “It has to be natural!”

5.3.3 Social media content and amount of time used on social media marketing

Interviewee 1 said that they are using a variety of content in their communication in social media channels including pictures, text, video and photos. They concentrate on keeping their posts informative and supportive to their campaigns. There was no mention about competitions or that kind of marketing. He says they use around 5 hours a week for social media marketing, with Facebook they aim to do daily updates and with Instagram they try to update every two/every three days depending on what is happening in the restaurant.

When it comes to content in social media people at Company B aim to offer their followers bit of everything, they aim to do about half informative posts and the other half to be more about branding. They especially want to bring up the good spirit inside the company and all the people working there in their relaxed atmosphere. This is important because the industry is not that “sexy” with pictures of equipment or technical information and they wish to bring something lighter for their audience like a funny picture of a moment at the office. When they have new video content it is linked to Facebook and Twitter, but all in all Interviewee 2 says it is about trying to reach all their followers attention in some way. According to her they use around 2-3 hours for social media marketing on a weekly basis, but she says they probably should use a little more.
For Company C content that gets put into social media is mostly related to new products or something special that is happening at the brewery, so it is very informative communication. Updates come from ideas coming from any one of the partners, they refine the ideas in co-operation into short concise messages that have been stripped from unnecessities. At the time of interview the author had noticed a craft beer competition on their Facebook page and asked if this is something they will continue doing in the future? Interviewee 3 said that this kind of competition is aimed to activate the audience into trying new things and getting deeper into the art of crafting beer. They are trying to make beer more of a hobby to their customers and this way expanding the culture and customer base. It is something they will continue in the future. Similarly to Company B they use around 2-3 hours weekly on updating social media, but more time is used if the additional work put into the label art and such is counted in.

When posting to social media channels Company D tries to avoid plain text posts, but they rather mix picture with text. They use Facebook to build their story piece by piece with photos of personnel, their food offering or other things they offer. Sometimes it can be more informative like lunch menu of the week. They do not want to use a lot of advertisement kind of content, but want to keep it casual, this is to avoid driving their followers away out of irritation. Interviewee 4 finds it important that they execute their social media strategy and communication systematically, because if they stop posting it will hurt the commitment level of their follower base. When it comes to use of time with social media he says posting itself is not that time consuming, but keeping a 100% answer rate and an average response time of one hour can be demanding. Communicating on social media is not bound in specific time so sometimes it means that questions are answered in the middle of the night. Additionally they react to reviews by liking and such. All in all he says they use around two hours daily on social media which makes it around 14 hours a week.

On the content side Company E believes strongly in a mix of text and pictures/photos in their posts, expanding their video production is something they are very enthusiastically trying to develop even to the point of quality short films they have already experimented with, but pictures/photos are what they are now focusing on with their social media posts. What the posts are about is mainly advertising certain products or something informative about what is happening in the store, what is new etc. He says: “Sometimes I wonder if it is even advertising, it is more like informing the audience.” They have had a few experiments with social media competitions, but they have so far wanted to stay away from doing “Like & Share”-campaigns because they do not feel like it fits their business philosophy. They want to be more creative and engage their crowd through some challenges like guess the placement of a certain team player, or something more creative like sharing certain experiences to win something. Interviewee 5 even mentions one time they had a poetry competition. When talking about time used on social media he says if they calculate in the following of other brands and research they use around 5 hours on social media on a weekly basis. He says he is happy about the level of their understanding about how others are doing social media marketing, but finds them to be a bit lacking on their own production of posts. He says that they aim to update their Facebook and Instagram several times every week, but have not been able to keep up lately and that this is what they strive to improve going in to the future.

Pictures supported by text was the content all of the case companies were most eagerly using at the time of the interviews. There is a growing interest towards using more video in the future, but producing such content is heavier so it is unlikely going to become the most common way of social media communication. Posting to Facebook or making an Instagram update is just so much easier. The case companies are not striving that hard to
increase their follower base, but are concentrating on providing quality content that gets the audience engaging with the content by liking, sharing and discussing. They want people to follow them out of honest interest, not out of high value competitions. Companies B, C and D talk about building their stories and getting closer to the audience with posts about the personnel or steps about setting up a brewery, or a hotel. Companies B and C use least time on social media, while Company D is using almost 15 hours weekly on their social media communication. All the companies’ representatives except for Company C were saying they would use more time on social media if they had some to spare.

When asked if they pay special attention towards the mobile users of social media the case companies were on different levels about the importance of the aspect. Interviewee 4 had strongest opinion on this saying: “Our webpage has been fully optimized for mobile use, the millennia generation is an important target group that uses their mobile devices for booking, so yes we have taken mobile users into account and see that it is a phenomenon that we need to be a part of.” Interviewee 2 said: “I trust the systems are responsive enough that they work for all users.” She continues that she does a lot of posts on her phone so she can see if the result is good before posting. Similarly Interviewee 3 trusts that the mobile clients work so well that you do not need to pay that much attention on it, he adds that when it comes to their web page, mobile users have not been the highest priority. Interviewee 5 says: “I don’t see how the mobile users should be considered differently? For example Instagram works so well on mobile devices.” After some pondering we came to the conclusion that he does take it into account, but it happens naturally rather than consciously. Company A uses same content that is designed for Instagram on their Facebook too so it is naturally good for mobile viewing. So all the companies do pay attention to the matter, but some are more conscious about it.

5.4 Motivation and benefits of using social media in marketing

In this part the author will shed some light on how the case companies have ended up going into social media to use it for marketing purposes, what they have expected from the channel and how has the channel been beneficial for the businesses.

5.4.1 Motivation behind social media marketing

Company A started using social media immediately when Interviewee 1 started running the business. He saw that within their main market segment the use of social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram was very high and that those would offer a great way of reaching all those people. For one, people use a lot of time on social media as part of their daily life and secondly it has increasingly become a source of many kinds of information. Interviewee 1 says: “Nowadays when somebody needs information the first thing is not to check their web page, but to check their Facebook page.”

Interviewee 2 from case Company B was not on board when they started their marketing activities in social media, the channels had been started on behalf of her predecessor, but she expected that the main reason for going into social media was mostly to get coverage in those channels and to build their brand and name as a solid provider in their industry. For this reason the author asked how she herself perceives social media and what it can bring to the table. She sees that in their case social media and marketing overall is something that can help soften this kind of hard technology industry and make it easier for people to approach them. By bringing up the people working inside the company or putting some photos from the office on show in social media is one way to achieve this. She also sees that social media is something that is changing the digital marketing world
we are used to and is amazed that some companies do not even have a web page anymore, but concentrate fully on their social media presence.

Interviewee 3 says that getting into social media marketing was a no brainer for their small brewery. He says: “If you are a modern small brewery willing to represent modern beer culture, then you also have to appear modern in your operations.” They had seen that their competitors were not doing a very good job in this part of their business and jumped in the opportunity to show how it is done. Social media was just one thing amongst many where they wanted to stand out to gain competitive advantage.

The biggest motivation for using social media as a marketing channel for Company D was that it is a cheap and fast way for reaching out to people. Secondly it is a channel that people find interesting and on that arouses emotions in them. As an example they have done a series of videos to YouTube where they presented some of the hotel staff, they also documented their open day event and opening ceremony day and uploaded the videos for everyone to see. Interviewee 4 says: “Communality and electronic word of mouth are very powerful marketing channels that have to be taken into account to avoid using loads of money on marketing, for example newspaper marketing has already seen its best days.” This is why they have felt important to have strong presence in social media from the very beginning.

Company E started using social media marketing over five years ago with Facebook and thus they have the longest experience for using social media as a marketing tool to help their business. From the beginning it has been used as a channel to inform their customers what they have to offer and for occasional advertising. As an example Interviewee 5 told me they had just reused a banner from way back for a yearly campaign. During the years they have updated their social media strategy and added promising channels to their mix. Company E sees social media as a marketing vehicle that can give a small company relatively vast coverage for a small price. However he says this has started to become harder to achieve lately and the matter will be discussed later in the challenges part.

From all this we can see that especially the low or even non-existent costs of using social media has motivated many of the case companies. Social media is a modern way to reach out to people and those people are interested to use the channels. Each business has their unique viewpoint about what they can achieve by marketing their business in different social media channels. People's tendency to use social media as an information source has been turned into an advantage by all of the case companies. For Company C social media communication is one aspect they can challenge their competition with. Allowing interaction between the business and their audience is another strong motivational factor for at least companies C, D and E. Branding and storytelling are other aspects that can be strongly supported with high quality social media communication.

5.4.2 Benefits of social media marketing

From the beginning Interviewee 1 expected that having active presence on social media would help their potential customers get information about what they are offering in the restaurant and that they know what is happening on each day. This is what he expected and he is happy with the results so far. The biggest advantages of social media in marketing from his perspective are that it is a cheap channel to use compared to other means, you can reach a wide audience and it is a channel that people use very frequently. When asked about how well can they reach their target segments he says that with social media it is rather easy, as with Facebook you can choose the criteria of who you target and with Instagram you just use the right hashtags and the right people will see it.
The marketing manager of Company B stated earlier that the role of social media in their overall marketing is rather small. However she sees that their presence in social media channels has raised the attention they wanted and helped build their trustworthiness in the field. They have noticed that many clients, partners and associates are closely following their activities in social media and they can use the channel to spread news from other media channels like newspapers to their audience that they might miss otherwise. They have received a fair amount of positive endorsement and congratulations for their achievements. They have even received a couple of requests for proposals from possible clients so overall they are happy with what social media has brought to their marketing mix. She likes the viral potential of social media and the fact that in social media your business appears the same everywhere and for everyone, which can be very important in the global context.

For Company C the biggest advantage of social media is that they can effectively inform their audience when and where new batches of beer will be available. They announce what the beers are called, what type of beer it is and reveal the tap labels. If they needed to do these announcements in other forms of media it would be much slower, and reaching as many interested people would be unlikely. He says that on Facebook for example, people interested in their beers will automatically notice their posts.

As already mentioned Company D values social media for it is cheap and fast way to reach a lot of people. They wanted social media to help them spread the word around and excel their restaurant service business within the local community and in this they have succeeded very well. Travelling business is the other important side they have been addressing which has been growing a little slower in the business travel segment, but well in the leisure travel segment. They are still in early stages of building their presence in the more business oriented social media channels Twitter and LinkedIn, but expect that to catch fire as they get more active on that side. All in all Interviewee 4 says that social media has proved to be well worth their efforts and results have been very positive.

When Company E started using social media as part of their marketing strategy they did not have specific expectations of what it would bring to the table. As a small company they were experimenting a lot of different things to see the reactions and effect on business. Interviewee 5 says at first it was less about marketing and more about communication and interaction with people. Over the years they have discovered that pushing marketing messages into social media creates an impulse in people’s brains. For Interviewee 5 the way social media works has amazed him, he says: “I put this kind of content into social media that this is happening and those products start to sell and it may not have anything to do with the content of the post. The impulse that comes in bursts can be clearly seen through following the online store and as a line behind the store door in the next morning.” So he says social media in their case works well as an impulse, it stays in the sub consciousness of people, it can be any situation when they check their phone for example and remember that they needed to order this and this.

The benefits of social media are very much the same as what has motivated the case companies to engage in the channels. It is fast, gives good coverage, it is low cost marketing or even totally free, it is modern, it is interesting and allows interaction. When asked if social media is easy to use, most companies responded it is easy to post, but creating content takes a lot of effort. For Company A social media allows them to be part of the daily routine of their customers and followers in an interesting way. For Company B social media has enabled them to strengthen their brand and reputation in their industry, it has even lead to a few leads. Social media offers Company C a unique announcement channel for their products that has helped them greatly on their early journey. Company
D has used social media to spread the word on their offerings and got their followers interested and talking to each other. Company E has benefited from the impulses social media marketing triggers in people and it keeps their name in the minds of their audience.

5.4.3 Social media impact on marketing and business

Use of social media has filled the expectations for spreading the word in case of Company A. The CEO says he has tested and seen that using social media has direct impact on how much people will show up for events promoted on social media as opposed to tests when he did not post anything. In their case social media has been around from the very beginning so it has not really changed the way of using marketing resources, but they do keep a close eye on how the field of social media changes and adapt when necessary.

Similarly Company B has been present in social media from the very early stages of their marketing. It has not really changed the way they do marketing overall, but as the company grows and business becomes more international, the social media marketing and presence needs to adapt and be more international. When asked if social media has affected their profitability Interviewee 2 says it is very hard to say, but maybe a little.

For Company C social media has been an essential tool for spreading the word of what is happening for their audience. They have been working hard on posting quality content and trying to keep up the interest of their followers. They feel that social media has really helped them create a “phenomenon” of sorts around their business and that their efforts have got local people interested about what they do and that it has positively impacted their profitability. They are very happy that these channels were available when they started and Interviewee 3 says: “It is wonderful that one can use these channels free, if these social media channels were not available, getting the same coverage in some paid media form would cost a lot of money.” They have been even surprised of how welcoming, happy and supportive people have been towards their business. When they polled for the best beers of 2015 they heard that lots of people had tasted all of their products from the year which proves people have adopted to the kind of culture they wanted to advance with their differentiating approach of producing beer.

When asked if the use of marketing resources has changed over the years, Interviewee 4 says that: “Generally in travelling business the focus of marketing has clearly shifted towards social media from print, even from radio and TV.” He describes the business impact of social media to be significant. As an example he says that customers can even make reservations to their restaurant through Facebook and same goes for booking rooms.

For Company E the use of marketing resources has changed a little during the years in the sense that social media takes more of Interviewee 5’s time, but they are still not happy with the level of activity in social media so they need to do more but lack the resources. Interviewee 5 says he is 100 percent certain that social media has affected their profitability, but it is very hard to put it into numbers. The coverage it brings for a small company for a very low price is indispensable with the more traditional means of media.

There are two interesting points recurring in the interviews. First one is that the case companies feel social media provides very good value for the low cost it can be operated with. There is much less risk in this sense than if one would spend their whole marketing budget on paid marketing campaigns in newspapers, radio or TV. Secondly the case companies have stated that social media has positively affected their profitability, for some it has been a minor effect while for others it has been significant. What stands out
is that many of the case companies were not able to put the effect of social media into numbers, but it was more based on a feeling and some experiments.

Table 7 summarizes the findings on the motivations behind social media marketing and how beneficial/impactful social media has been for each case company.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case company</th>
<th>Motivation for using social media</th>
<th>Benefits of using social media</th>
<th>Impact of social media on business profitability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company A</td>
<td>People use social as an information source and it is part of their daily routines</td>
<td>Big audience, Fast to use, Cheap way for marketing</td>
<td>Directly affects the amount of people that turn up to the restaurant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company B</td>
<td>Brand building</td>
<td>Has raised positive attention from different interest groups</td>
<td>Maybe a little, they have gained coverage and a couple of leads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>They wanted to represent modern brewery culture and gain advantage to their competitors</td>
<td>Effective and cheap way to reach their target audience</td>
<td>Positive impact as they have got so many people interested in their offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company D</td>
<td>Cheap and fast way to reach a lot of people</td>
<td>One can tell a story with social media and spread the word fast</td>
<td>Significant impact, customers can even make purchases through the channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company E</td>
<td>Good way for informing the audience and occasional advertisement</td>
<td>Vast coverage for a small price, Messages trigger buying behaviour in customers</td>
<td>Strong feeling that social media has improved their profitability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Summary of social media motivation, benefits and impact for case companies

5.5 Challenges of using social media in marketing

In this part of the analysis the author will go through the main challenges that the case companies have faced while using social media in their marketing. Afterwards a few other interesting points arising from the literature review’s challenges are reflected on from the viewpoint of each case company. The interest points are: level of social media marketing knowledge and measuring social media, integrated marketing strategy and social media management and targeting social media communication.

5.5.1 Challenges of social media marketing

Starting with Company A there were a few very important and timely challenges Interviewee 1 had noticed while using social media in their marketing. As mentioned before he is not going to use social media channels that he does not feel comfortable with. As an example he learned the ways of Instagram from a colleague by closely following her actions using the channel, this way he was able to build his own understanding about the channel and after a while he was comfortable to use the channel on his own. He says:
“In every channel you need to talk differently, different channel means different voice.”
Each channel needs to be understood and used accordingly.

The timely challenge Interviewee 1 is worried about is the direction most popular social media channels are moving towards. Facebook has already made changes to their algorithms that make it harder to reach your whole audience with each update when you are not using money on it. He says that in that sense Facebook is going down in their eyes, while Instagram still enables you to reach your followers. However as Instagram has grown very popular and started to build their advertisement features, it may be just a matter of time that they do the same trick as Facebook. This is why Interviewee 1 sees it important for start-ups to follow the scene and find the new popular channels that bring better value in reach for free. He additionally reminds that in the mature channels you can affect the reach of updates by making the content interesting and versatile, so that it gets people engaging with your updates. The more repeating the content of your posts is the less visibility it will gain in a channel like Facebook.

Interviewee 2 from Company B concurs that there is a lot that one needs to learn in order to get value from social media in marketing use. For example when a new interesting target segment comes up they need to do a lot of research to understand what is the best social media channel to reach such segment. Where will those companies be present? Another challenge in their case has been with the internalization process as they try to find the best way to serve the different markets in social media but still keep it simple. Their US subsidiary has their own Twitter account and that means it is harder to control the marketing messages. They have had small issue with content like pictures used, that they had no rights for and needed to be taken down, but they are working on improving this process. Same issues will likely arise for the other channels as they keep growing.

Similarly to the other case companies Company C finds the threshold much higher with newer social media channels that they have not grown into using. They find it much harder to understand these channels, to understand the target audience and how the channels are supposed to be used. The fast changes in the field of social media do not help either. Interviewee 2 says: “When it comes to a new social media channel it starts with learning how the channel is used, then you build your understanding on the profile of the user base and only then you start using it for business purposes.” The higher entry barrier and the scarce amount of time resources has held the company from expanding to some channels. The extra time and effort needed for learning and creating tailored content for many channels has lead them to concentrate their effort on Facebook for now.

Interviewee 4 sees the biggest challenge of social media marketing in producing high quality content that engages people. They want to continuously keep up the interest of their audience. Another matter is controlling the negative tone of messages, being as diplomatic as possible and avoiding offending anyone. They are prepared with risk management against phenomenon like online trolling, which they positively have had no need for yet, but it is possible in their eyes. It can be very harmful if someone comes out of nowhere and for no reason starts to criticise and giving bad reviews.

Company E has been struggling hard with the lack of man power and time resources when it comes to social media marketing. They would like to hire a part time or a full time employee to fill this void, but they cannot be sure if they can afford it and do not want to put anyone in the situation where after a few months they need to let the person go. They have so much ideas and the channels are ready, but they do not have the time to utilize them to their full potential.
It was mentioned only in relation to case companies C and E so far, but the lack of time resource was in some way holding all the case companies back. The worry of changes in the social media channels towards paid advertisement pointed out by Interviewee 1 was shared by Company E. These are likely to be main challenges each of the case companies need to address in the near future. When it comes to running daily marketing efforts the challenge lies in the quality of content and how well they can target it. Internationalization is a matter that concerns especially companies B and D, but Company C is aiming for foreign markets as their business matures.

There were only a few things to say about prejudice towards social media in marketing use and the experiences the case companies have had so far while using it. Company A has only had minor problems with one enthusiastic follower but nothing serious. Company B has had no negative thoughts or experiences for what comes to use of social media, Interviewee 2 says you just have to take responsibility and thoroughly think what you post into the channels. Company C was highly worried about how the strict Finnish legislation would affect their social media marketing, but there have been no problems from that direction so far. Interviewee 4 says they had no prejudice towards social media, but he knew from past experience it is a safe channel for presales, marketing and informing interest groups. With current business they have had only few occasions when discussions have taken a turn towards totally irrelevant matters and moderation has been needed. Interviewee 5 says that from the very beginning of social media marketing they decided that whatever the responses from the audience, no matter how negative, they will not suppress those voices, but remain transparent and react to any kind of feedback as soon as possible.

5.5.2 Social media marketing knowledge and measuring social media

Companies A, B and D have people with strong business/marketing backgrounds available, while companies C and E have no actual marketing background, but have built their knowledge through experience and on their own time. Only companies B and D have dedicated people working especially on marketing, Interviewee 2 as the marketing manager in Company B and the chain marketing professionals in the case of Company D. Companies A, C and E are conducting their marketing efforts in parallel with all other important processes related to their business. The general manager of Company D despite having help from the chain has many other responsibilities than just marketing.

For the lack of time resources to be used on social media all the case companies would definitely benefit from extra workforce working on social media, but hiring a marketing specialist is a big investment for these companies. In each interview there was talk about how it would be nice to do this and try this channel, but those few people do not have time to do it all and must prioritize.

Measuring social media marketing effectiveness in terms of profitability was a bit vague for most of the case companies. The CEO of Company A describes his process for measuring like this: “I do not collect data on an excel sheet or anything like that, but I kind of process the channels automatically in my head. Because now I have been doing it quite a lot, so basically I have a kind of feeling.” As already mentioned he has done a few tests to see how the level of informing audience affects the turn up of people. He says that when he has more time available he will start doing the follow up more thoroughly.

As Company B uses social media in a B2B environment they are not that much interested in the shifts of follower numbers, likes and such. Those are important, but Interviewee 2 says such things stay quite well in her memory and she knows how many they have gained.
since last check. She has been more interested to see where their followers are spread geographically in Facebook as they aim for more foreign markets. They have followers from countries they have not been active in and they try to understand why these people are interested and how they can take use of it later. This geographical spread has been most interesting in this state of their growth and future plans.

Company C does monthly follow ups in social media as for changes in followers and their position compared to competition. They have this monitoring profile that they use in Facebook to see what kind of posts do not get the desired level of interest from the audience and can use this information to improve the future content to be more engaging.

Company D is actively measuring how well their marketing methods are working. For all the customers that have stayed the night they send feedback questionnaires after a week has passed since their visit. This allows them to find out where the customers have heard about them and how well their campaigns are working out. Naturally they follow their turn up at the restaurant and interview customers as they meet them at the hotel to further help the measuring process. According to Interviewee 4 sometimes customers are even spontaneous and tell these things themselves like: “I just saw this campaign on Facebook, or this post on Instagram.” They use a review software for their feedbacks that gives them daily and weekly reports. They follow Facebook statistics closely, not only how they are doing, but how they fair in comparison to their competition.

Interviewee 5 from Company E says they have been focusing their measuring on AdWords as it is very important tool to improving and following on their online shop activity. On that front they have found the recipe for getting best value on each euro spent by testing different levels of marketing. He says they know how to get the measures they want from social media channels such as Facebook, but they have not yet done the operations needed to achieve this. He says: “Facebook gives guidance on how businesses can get the measures they need like: ‘Put this on your web page and do this.’” Their experience with Google marketing should help them as they start executing plans on measuring social media when they see it is time to start it.

5.5.3 Integrated marketing strategy and social media management

The case companies have grown in the era of social media and not into it. They have started the businesses when these channels have already been utilized widely by both individual people and companies. They have not needed to adapt from strategies built solely on other media forms, but social media has been part of the process from the very early stages. This is most likely the reason why when asked if there have been problems with integrating social media to their marketing mix, none of the case companies had been having any real issues.

However for what comes to managing social media efforts there were some early signs of problems for at least Company B that was in the situation where they needed to start dividing the responsibility of communicating in social media channels. Expanding business from to foreign markets forces the company to make decision how the marketing efforts are carried out in the different markets. Creating separate accounts and deciding communication language(s) used in the different channels are just the main issues that need to be addressed. The more a company grows the harder it is to keep things simple. This may similarly affect at least companies C, D and E in the future depending on how much effort they decide to put into international marketing efforts.
The author asked all interviewees if they had a social media policy in place to help managing the channels on how they are to be used. Company D was the only one that had written guidelines for social media communication available in their intranet. Interviewee 2 from Company B said they are following the general code of good principles that are used in marketing like: “We don’t publish any photos or video without consent from the individuals related to them.” As an example she mentioned they left their open day video unpublished because there were people they could not reach and get the consents from. So to be sure not to violate anyone’s rights they decided not to use it. They felt it was a big sacrifice but one that had to be done.

Companies A, C and E do not have any written policy for social media communication, but they have some guidelines that the people working with social media are informed of. In case of Company A the CEO is now taking full responsibility of social media communication on behalf of the business. Earlier in the case of Instagram as an example he was telling the associate helping him what they want to achieve. He said: “I was guiding, giving some advice on how to speak and what the business is about. What we should do and what we shouldn’t do?” This is how he works when he needs to use his staff to help with marketing communication. In Company C the partners simply do this in mutual understanding and do not see the need for a policy. In Company E Interviewee 5 does the social media related directly to the business, so in that sense he is his own boss. For the sponsored team they have given guidance on what type of message they want to deliver. He says “We have given guidelines not only on what kind of content should be posted, but especially we advise them to concentrate on the positive things and unload the negative stuff somewhere else.” They do not believe that much in written instructions, but rather aim to give the guidelines and tips in person to the whole team.

As mentioned in part 5.5.1 companies have had little threat or hostility towards their reputation in the channels of social media. This may be for they are small and not that interesting in the eyes of media for example and they have not given any reason for anyone to start beating their mouth. Many of the case companies brought up that they want to appear as honest and transparent as possible, but reacting fast to all feedback in order to control the tone messages. At least companies D and E were against any sort of moderation, as long as the feedback is justified and they are not intentionally being discredited. In the case of Company D they do however have risk management in place if such ill-suited actions were to be used against them.

### 5.5.4 Targeting social media communication

For Company A the targeting in social media channels especially Facebook and Instagram has been very straightforward. Interviewee 1 says: “If you use Facebook you have criteria that you can choose very easily. In Instagram you choose the hashtags and it goes there.” He says it can be improved, but he understands how to do it well. Interviewee 2 follows the same lead saying that especially when you start using paid advertisement it is made very easy for business to choose the criteria. She was referring to advertising in Facebook or LinkedIn. For this reason she thinks they know how to target the right people in social media, because it is made so easy in the channels. Company C says that their main target segment is so narrow that getting through to those exact people is not likely, that is why they aim for broader audience with their social media communication to get better reach overall and spread their brewing culture. So in their case one could say targeting has been a bit problematic, but this partly because they want to reach their audience free of charge.

Interviewee 4 from Company D is very happy with how well they have reached the right people in the relatively short time they have been operating for. He says when it comes
to the amount of followers they are doing very well compared to their more experienced competitors. “Our Instagram channel has more followers than Visit Oulu, it is one house vs. the whole city, so what we have accomplished is quite remarkable, but of course we can always do better and more.” For Company E the target segment has changed dramatically over the years for the fast development around the sports they work with. He says “The age of our customers starts from like 10 year olds going up to as far as 70, both male and female customers.” There has been strong traction and interest from the public including wide media coverage within the last few years. He says: “We could pretty much start marketing for everyone, we are locally so well known that we can get pretty much anyone interested in what we have to offer.” So far they have however pushed their content to their followers and the friends of their followers in Facebook, but are no considering to start doing public posts.

5.6 Going forward

When asked about the biggest challenge with social media marketing, Interviewee 1 said: “It is reaching the people you want to. You have to reach the people you want to have and tell out your message accordingly. And that is tough.” He says he has a plan and the experience for overcoming this challenge, but that this plan needs to be updated from time to time. In the future he wants to use social media more for branding and telling more about their business offerings, not just advertising.

Interviewee 2 says that time is their biggest challenge as she is solely responsible for marketing and at times she is so busy with other things that she does not have enough time to prepare quality content for social media. To improve this they are not going to hire a social media specialist, but try to better utilize all their current resources in order to fair better with their social media communication. In the future she is most enthusiastic about their new video productions, they were just about to start filming their next product video.

For Company C one big challenge they see with their social media is that most of their followers in Facebook are local and they want to expand their message further. They are eventually aiming for foreign markets so they have consider using English in their posts, but they do not want to drive away their local audience either. Finding the middle ground is what they are looking for. Considering future of social media use they are open to new ideas but have not really thought about it other than what comes to the internalization at some point in the future. Interviewee 3 says video and other content that can catch the attention of people for longer than a moment is one interesting option.

Interviewee 4 says they will be concentrating their improvement efforts on the business oriented social media channels to tackle the business travel segments. For this they need Twitter, LinkedIn and some material that makes them stand out in the eyes of this type of audience, for example a YouTube video introducing their meeting facilities. Currently they are building the story of their business on YouTube and they are interested in using more Periscope for marketing purposes. Cooking tips from their world class chef are another interesting way to engage their audience, they have plenty of ideas for the future. All the measures they decide to take will be integrated into their annual clock of marketing.

Company E wishes to improve their production of quality content into Facebook, Instagram and video content channels. They want the content to be of the right kind, not just advertising or sales announcements and such, but more like quality videos that have additional value than just marketing value, like entertainment value. They have advised
their team bloggers to find interesting angles for their entries such as mental game, training related tips, combining sports and family, not just repetitive competition reports. Their biggest challenge is the lack of time resource and it is the very matter they need to sort out in order to get ahead of their growing competition. Interviewee 5 says they either need to hire someone to help or he needs to take the time from other things and do it right.
6. Discussion

The research questions chosen to be answered in this thesis were: “How do companies use social media in their daily marketing efforts?” as the main research question and the supporting research questions: “Why is it important to them?”, “What challenges have the companies experienced?” and “How important is the role of social media as a part of overall marketing strategy?”

Now that the literature review, research method and the empirical data have been introduced it is possible to answer the research questions. The findings from the different cases can be discussed and compared to one another. Additionally the data will be compared against the findings from the literature review. The author will subjectively further explain and interpret these findings leaning on his own knowledge and understanding.

So to briefly answer the main research question the author sees the case companies were mainly using social media to inform their audiences about their business in general and informing about daily matters like events, offers, announcements, competitions amongst other things. Another important aspect for the case companies was brand building. Mostly the companies were doing this by trying to engage their audience in a way that the selling proposal is embedded in the content, but some direct advertisement in social media was also used. In the following paragraphs the author has discussed the channels, content and time used by the case companies in their daily social media marketing and made comparisons against other research.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) had put social media into six categories (see Figure 1) and three of those blogs (Twitter, Blogs), social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn) and content communities (YouTube, Instagram) were present in one or more of the case companies. Then there were a few industry specific review sites like RateBeer and Untapped in use of company C, while TripAdvisor was important to Company D. Facebook was the most important channel as four out of the five companies raised it above others. Similarly Facebook was seen most important platform (52% of respondents) in the social media industry report by Steltzner (2015). See Table 6 for the channels used by the case companies.

The author noted that the case companies were concentrating on very similar channels, which all represent some of the most popular social media channels. The biggest difference to be found was that the more B2B oriented companies B and D talked much more about the importance of the business sector which can be especially reached with Twitter and LinkedIn, while others were mainly focusing their social media efforts on consumers. Twitter and LinkedIn were similarly found more important by B2B companies than B2C companies in the Steltzner (2015) report. This has to do with the profile of these channels and what they represent, the business people can be easier to target in these channels, than on a social network like Facebook. Facebook was in use by all the case companies and it is the most versatile channel that allows updates including text, pictures and video, ways to communicate directly with other users and it allows companies to create events which at least Company A uses in their marketing regularly.

There were some differences when the case companies were compared to the Steltzner (2015) report when talking about channels like Google+ and Pinterest that were merely mentioned as side notes by companies D & E, but are very popular according to his results. See Table 1 for some of Steltzner’s findings. So not only does the industry and
target audience affect the choices of channels, but there seems to be geographical effect that some channels are far more popular in some part of the world than another. Another slight difference compared to the report is that the case companies A, B and C were using less time on average on social media on a weekly basis, however company D was using by far the most time on social media (14 hours) out of the five case companies. Facebook ads and Google ads were most used paid social media according to the report, similar findings were made in the case companies, with the exception Company B had found good use for paid advertisement on LinkedIn too.

Then an interesting find that concerns the content used in social media. Blogging was second most used form of social media (70% of respondents) and the most important form of social media (70% of respondents) in Steltzner’s (2015) report. Only case companies D and E said they were using blogging in their social media marketing and for company D it was only occasional. All companies were using Twitter, but it was mostly about reposting content that was created for other social media channels. Company B saw most value in Twitter as they were aiming for international markets, while company D was preparing to pay more attention to the channel in near future. However it is a matter of how blogging is perceived, at least companies B, D and E were using social media channels to tell out things such as story of their company, introducing the employees, or their sponsored players in case of Company E. So even though they do not use Twitter or actual blogging sites for this, they kind of do similar content from time to time. Visual content (71% of respondents) was the most used content in the Steltzner (2015) report which was similarly most preferred content type by the case companies along with growing interest towards using video.

For what comes to social media content within the case companies the focus on average was on engaging the audiences and keeping them interested, rather than focusing on expanding the amount of followers in the channels. Chi (2011) and Drury (2008) were also about giving customers something valuable and what they are actually interested about. Many case companies mentioned to be following what kind of posts engage their audience most and that they try to provide versatile content. Reacting to all kinds of feedback, questions and discussions on behalf of the case companies was another important aspect according to the interviews. So what Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) advised: “be active, be interesting, be humble, be unprofessional, and be honest”, these aspects are strongly present with the marketing efforts of the case companies. Blog influencer/buzz agent strategy was only present in the case of Company E and their sponsored athletes. See Figure 4.

Then to answer the question why social media is important to the case companies there were a few clear benefits on the lips of each case company. Social media in marketing is fast and effective way to reach a wide audience for a small price. It is a channel that interests people, a channel that so many people use as a part of their daily lives and it enables companies to tell their stories in a modern way.

The motivations behind going for social media marketing arising from the literature review had a lot do with appearing modern, being available to customers and being on the same line with competition. Another view was that the state of economy is a possible factor driving companies to find cheaper option like social media to be used in marketing. See Table 2. There were similarities to be found within the case companies as with literature, but one difference was that rather than getting on level with competition the case companies wanted to do social media marketing far better than the competition and get advantage over them. Appearing modern was mentioned by Company C, Company D had very strong opinion that presence in social media is required to get included into the
purchasing processes of people and all the companies were happy with the value of social media as a cheap marketing channel compared to other forms of media. There were a couple of interesting additions from the case companies like the ability to arouse emotions in people by Company D and the fact that social media is part of the daily routine of so many people as Interviewee 1 said. See Table 7.

Baird & Parasnis (2010) and Weber (2009) had found numerous uses for social media and at least one the case companies were utilizing each one of them. Social media is very flexible: all case companies used it for informing their audiences of timely matters, most used it for interacting with the audience, paid advertisement and branding. Companies C and D used review sites as feedback channels for future improvements while Company B had found a few leads through social media. For what comes to social media benefits according to Kirtis and Karahan (2011) the biggest advantages are related to time, audience, relations and cost. These were the ones on the top of the list for most case companies too. There are some additions from the case companies like triggering buying behavior in case of Company E and ability to tell stories by Company D. Social media has also positively affected company reputations similar to Dijkmans et al. (2015) study.

Looking at the results from Rodriguez et al. (2014) their study showed that CRM and social media can improve customer orientation and sales performance. Similar results can be seen with all the case companies while the range of effects goes from small to significant. In these cases it is naturally more about social media rather than CRM, but there are clear signs that the social media channels are helping these companies fair better. However when it came to measuring these effects it was based more on the feeling of the interviewees than hard numbers. All the companies were conducting some sort of follow up on their social media channels, like doing tests, counting follower numbers, analyzing what sort of posts engage their audience the best and so on. Company D was the one doing extensive follow up on their social media and numbers. As Fisher (2009) wrote measuring ROI in social media can be hard, the case companies have adopted their own specific processes for follow up, but for them it was hard to tell any exact numbers.

So here we can move on to challenges the case companies had experienced with social media marketing. Measuring social media was not actually mentioned as a challenge, but something that the people responsible for marketing did not have adequate time to do properly. Time was the biggest challenge for all the case companies when it comes to social media marketing. Learning about the different channels to understand them and constantly producing high quality content were other aspects that especially challenged the case companies and their time usage. Internationalization was showing early signs of challenges for Company B and it may prove challenging for the other case companies as they mature. One other challenge was related to the changes within the different social media channels like moving towards paid advertising for better traffic, punishing those who wish to do social media marketing for free.

Protecting company reputation was another aspect that raised up from the literature review. See Table 4. Only Company D had a written social media policy available, but all the other case companies had taken good social media practices into account one way or another. None of the case companies had had any really bad experiences while using social media nor did any of them mention having felt threat towards their reputation. As long as the people responsible for social media communication understand how the channels are used properly, there is little that can go wrong, but a social media policy can work to one’s advantage when the unexpected happens. Interviewee 2 mentioned they do not take any risks when it comes to social media because things can escalate so quickly.
As the companies grow they will have more to lose as for what comes their reputations and it will not hurt to have some risk management or a policy to protect them.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) said that companies should choose social media platforms based on the target group and the message that they want to communicate. It was rather surprising that all the case companies were saying the choices of channels had come very naturally and that finding the right platforms for reaching their target audiences was not an issue really. Although Interviewee 1 mentioned some channels may take time getting used to and Interviewee 2 said they have been researching for best channels to reach specific customer segments.

So how big role did social media have in the marketing strategies of the case companies? This proved to be a very interesting research question for what comes to the findings. Only company B was using social media marketing in a supportive role compared to their main marketing efforts, while companies A, C, D & E were using social media in a significant role in their overall marketing strategies. Traditional media like newspapers, radio and TV were used mainly occasionally by the case companies except for Company D that was quite active in free deliveries and radio. The findings are interesting when they are compared against the literature.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review Mangold & Faulds (2009) were worried that marketing managers do not have adequate guidance available for adopting social media as part of their integrated marketing strategies. Year 2009 was when case company E started their business and at the same time they jumped straight to using Facebook as a marketing channel for their business. The rest of the case companies have started their businesses and social media marketing much later. These companies have been able to start fresh with their marketing without the need to adapt the old ways with these new marketing channels that technology now offers.

In the literature review social media was mostly referred to as something that needs to be embedded in an existing marketing strategy. This is the case for all traditional companies that have been around for the last few decades or so. However as the case companies in this study are much younger, they have grown into the era of social media as part of people’s lives and seen how the scene has been evolving. Many of the case companies were saying their competitors have been doing a poor job with social media and decided to show how it is done. In this sense they have had an advantage, however there are plenty of social media channels to choose from that appeal to different crowds. Social media channels come and go, evolve and change their business strategies. This is what concerns all companies engaging is social media marketing, including all the case companies. Everyone need to stay on their toes and follow closely what happens next or even try to see ahead for possible advantage.

The advantage of small companies compared to the larger ones may also have something to do with their agility in adapting to such changes. As mentioned earlier in these five case companies the decision making can happen very quickly so if they see a problem like that their Facebook posts are not getting through well enough, they can react fast and try to find a better channel or pay for better reach. The bigger these companies grow in the future and the more they invest into certain channels, adapting to such changes and making the required decisions will be harder and slower.

Now that the research questions have been answered and discussed there are a couple points of interest left to discuss. Mobile use of social media was one important aspect the author wanted to address in the study as it was drawing attention in the literature review,
but in the interviews mobile social media did not really come on top of the conversations. It is not that surprising for the fact that the most popular social media platforms are available on mobile devices and when talking about for example Facebook one automatically talks about it in general not thinking about how it is used. It was however surprising that none of the case companies mentioned any Space-timers like Foursquare or Space-locators like Yelp. So with the case companies only Quick-timers and Slow-timers were present in the interviews. (See Figure 3) Humphreys (2013) was expecting that the role of mobile use of the internet will be increasing with the future generations, but only Company D made it clear that mobile social media is something they take very seriously. For the other companies the mobile aspect in regard to social media was taken care of either subconsciously or it simply was not felt that important to them.

To take a brief look into the predictions of where social media marketing may be going towards this year (2016) the author takes a few notions from a web article by Jenkins (2015) First interesting prediction is that social media goes private. According to the article, platforms like Snapchat, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp will be forcing brands to get on a more personal level with their social media strategy, offering certain content for only those part of a private group around a certain brand. This prediction did not come up in the case study except for a few mentions about Snapchat, but another prediction did, that all companies need to get ready to pay more for traffic. The popular platforms are one by one crafting their distinguished algorithms that rank the content posted and that affects how many streams the posts will appear in. To boost the traffic companies can spend a little extra money. This worry was on mind of at least Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 5. Third interesting prediction from the same article is that live video will go mainstream with platforms like Periscope and Facebook Live gaining popularity. Company E had already experimented one time with Periscope and they were enthusiastic to use to more in the future.

To close the discussion the author wants to conclude with a personal view of social media in business use today. As many of the case companies mentioned social media has many benefits when it is compared to traditional marketing mediums like newspapers and radio. Before one had to send their advert designed to fit a specification provided by a newspaper and pay for the ad to get it printed in the paper the next day or even later, or make a contract with a radio station of an advertisement spot with strict rules to apply to air at certain time(s) of a day. This way a company can reach the readers of the specific newspaper(s) or listeners of the radio channel(s). These channels still have their uses as has been discussed earlier, but the use of these channels is diminishing for obvious reasons. As an example today one can simply take a picture of a product offering they want to promote, add some good flavour text to go with it, choose the hashtags to target the message and send it on Instagram. All this for the price of one’s own effort! Why would any company overlook this opportunity in their marketing strategy?
7. Conclusions

The goal of this study was to build understanding on how companies can use social media as a part of their marketing strategy. In the first phase the author had made a literature review on the topic of social media marketing to understand what the phenomenon is about and what discoveries other researchers had made. In the second phase the author gathered empirical data from five small/medium sized companies in the Oulu area to see how these companies were doing their social media marketing, why they saw it as a good marketing channel and what their challenges had been so far. This type of companies were targeted because the literature was lacking on knowledge on this part. The ultimate goal was to help future companies make good use of social media as a marketing tool as there are many benefits to be gained, but certain challenges exist that need to be understood and addressed.

Let us have a quick recap on the research questions and the main findings. Starting with the main research question: How do companies use social media in their daily marketing efforts? The case companies were using social media mainly for informing their audiences and for branding their businesses. There were clear similarities between the case companies on what comes to choices of channels and the content used in the marketing communication in social media channels. Four out of five companies used 5 or less hours weekly on social media marketing, Company D used almost 15 hours.

Then the supporting research questions. Why is social media important to them? Biggest motivators/benefits for using social media for the case companies were that it is a fast, cheap channel that allows vast coverage and is very flexible to use for different purposes from basic posting of various content to interaction with the audience and even as a feedback channel. Use of social media has also had positive impact on the profitability of the companies taking part in this study, more or less. What challenges have the case companies experienced? Lack of marketing resources and time was the most common challenge with social media marketing for the case companies. Other challenges were related to the fast changes in the field of social media channels, internationalization, reaching the right people and providing audience quality content fast enough. How important is the role of social media as a part of overall marketing strategy? The role of social media in most of the case companies marketing strategies was significant, even dominant for companies A, C & E.

As the case companies represented different industries and were of different sizes there were some differences to be found between the companies and the way they use social media as has been explained earlier. When the findings of this study were compared to the findings of Steltzner (2015) social media industry report there were many similarities especially in regard to the channels, but some interesting differences like the low use of blogging by the case companies while it was widely used according to the report and that the case companies used a little less time on average on their social media marketing.

The interviews conducted for gathering empirical data were designed to address the findings of the literature review with emphasis on motivation, benefits and challenges of using social media in marketing. On those parts both the literature review and the empirical study offered good coverage, but parts like integrating social media into marketing strategy and mobile social media did not find their way on top in the interviews. The integration part has to do with the fact that all case companies chosen were relatively young companies with fresh strategies, but the low interest on mobile social media specifically is hard to explain.
The young lifespan of the case companies is a strong suit of the study, as it should provide startups some good advice on how to approach social media as a marketing channel, which was an important aspect. To give some advice the author would propose future companies to start with one social media channel they are familiar with, start building a follower base they can share their content with, and after that channel has been conquered, one can move on to other channels. It is important to understand one’s own business, the target audience and the industry specific points where social media can prove to be an asset and provide higher value compared to other means of marketing communication. It is also important to follow up and measure the effectiveness of marketing efforts in the social media channels and to follow the social media scene itself. This enables companies to improve their communication and helps them react to possible changes in the channels. For those companies that are not at all familiar with social media marketing it may be best to get some outside help to initiate social media marketing efforts, and possibly take over later as the understanding of the channels has improved.

The fact that all case companies are rather young is however also a limitation of the study as it may not support the more experienced companies that well. Another limitation comes from the fact that results of each interview are subjective to the one interviewee and the lead of the author in the interviews. However the author is confident he had found the best suited people from each company to be interviewed and that the integrity of each interview was not compromised by his own actions during the interviews.

For future study the author finds that there are many approaches that would benefit this field of research. For one it would be interesting to target companies that are not engaging in social media and find out why they are hesitant to do so. Another approach arising from the limitation of this study would be to study companies with longer history and experience with their business and see if the findings related to using social media in their marketing would be different. Third area that did not get much empirical coverage in this study is the mobile aspect of social media and how it specifically can boost social media marketing efforts.
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Appendix A


Tausta
Aluksi vähän nopeita taustatietoa käsitteleviä kysymyksiä (Toimiala, Koko, Perustamisvuosi, Haastateltavan rooli ja palvelusvuodet yrityksessä, Liiketoimintamalli)
Voisitteko kuvailla lyhyesti yrityksen harjoittamaa liiketoimintaa?

Markkinointiprosessi, -kanavat ja -viestintä
Voisitteko kertoa yrityksen markkinointitoiminnasta yleisellä tasolla?
Mitä sosiaalisen median kanavia yritys käyttää markkinoinnissa? Miksi juuri kyseiset on valittu? (Onko esim. ollut muita kanavia harkinnassa mutta sitten jostain syystä poissuljettu?)

Onko eri kanavilla oma käyttötarkoitus?
Käytetäänkö maksullisia sosiaalisen median ratkaisuja?
Tärkein sosiaalisen median kanava ja miksi se on tärkein?

Voisitko kertoa, miten te käytätte eri sosiaalisen median kanavia markkinoinnissa? Mihin eri tarkoituksiin niitä käytetään?
Minkä tyyppistä sisältöä sosiaalisessa markkinoinnissa käytetään? (Päivitykset, blogit, kuvat, videot?)

Mitä muita markkinointikanavia yritys käyttää ja kuinka hyvin viestintä eri kanavissa on integroitu?

Voisitko kertoa teidän markkinointiin liittyvästä päätösprosessista yrityksen sisällä?
Montako ihmistä tekee markkinointia tai sitä koskevia päätöksiä?
Missä rooleissa?

Tehdäänkö markkinointi vain yrityksen sisällä vai käytetäänkö myös ulkopuolista apua?

Paljonko käytetään aikaa?

Huomioiko yritys mobiilikäyttäjiä sosiaalisessa viestinnässään ja miten? Miksi?
Sosiaalisen markkinoinnin hyödyt

Milloin sosiaaliseen markkinointiin on ryhdytty?

Mikä sai yrityksen aloittamaan sosiaalisen markkinoinnin?

Mikä on sosiaalisen markkinoinnin rooli yrityksen markkinointistrategiassa?

Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät koetut hyödyt? Millaisia hyötyjä odotitte kun otitte sosiaalinen media markkinoinnin käyttöön? Miten nämä odotukset ovat täyttyneet eri kanavien osalta?

Miten sosiaalisen markkinoinnin mukaantulo on vaikuttanut yritykseen?

Onko sosiaalisen markkinoinnin mukaantulo muuttanut markkinointiresurssien käyttöä?

Koetteko sosiaalisen markkinoinnin vaikuttaneen yrityksen liiketoimintaan tuloksellisella tasolla? (Perustuuko tietoon vai tuntemukseen?)

Sosiaalisen markkinoinnin haasteet

Onko yritys kokenut haasteita harjoittaessaan sosiaalista markkinointa? Millaisia konkreettisia esimerkkejä osaatte antaa?

Eroavatko haasteet eri sosiaalisen median tyypeissä? Ja miten/miksi?

Onko ollut negatiivia ennakkoluuloja tai kokemuksia sosiaalisen markkinoinnin käyttöön liittyen?

Minkälainen tietotaso yrityksessä on sosiaalisen median hyödyntämisestä markkinoinnissa?

Onko kouluttauduttu vai itseopiskeltu?
Oliko vaikea valita mitä kanavia käyttää?
Osataanko mitata vaikutuksia?
Onko yrityskäytäntöä sovitut käytännöistä sosiaalisen markkinoinnin käyttöön liittyen?

Mikä on suurin sosiaalisen markkinoinnin haaste tällä hetkellä?

Onko suunnitelmia miten tästä pääsi yli?

Mihin suuntaan aiotte seuraavaksi kehittää sosiaalista markkinointia?