



Digital Marketing Plan for Online Business Education Provider

Case study of Transekspertti Oy

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The global market of online business education is developing at incremental pace in the recent years. The local online education providers are facing the challenge of competing and expanding in the digital environment. The study is conducted to research the digital marketing area in Finland and identify the digital marketing opportunities for online business education providers that operate locally. The research is focused on the most popular digital marketing channels used in Finland in 2018 according to the Statista statistical data. The study is conducted for a private Finnish-based company Transeskperitti Oy, that provides online education services. The topic of the research is chosen according to the needs and interests of the case company. The aim of this study is to develop a strategic and simple digital marketing plan that allows the case enterprise expand in local business environment. The research identifies conceptual frameworks and models that can be used by the case company to create the digital marketing plan, analyses digital marketing channels and instruments that have been successfully used by the case enterprise and clarifies how the case company should use digital marketing tools to expand on the market. The research is based on semi-structured interviews and customers' reviews. Due to the data collection, the research is limited by the interviewers' personal opinion and interpretations. During the study the fundamental concepts of Digital, Social Media, Influencer and Search Engine marketing were carefully described in the theoretical part to ensure the correct application of these theoretical domains during the creation of the digital marketing plan. As the result of the analysis of different marketing planning frameworks, SOSTAC planning model was chosen and described in details. In order to create digital marketing plan the qualitative data was collected via semi-structured interview with the founder of the company and analysis of the testimonials of the clients. Following the steps of SOSTAC planning model the objectives, strategies, tactics, action and control procedures were defined. As the result of the research the strategic, simple and efficient digital marketing plan was developed for the case enterprise.</p>	

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Online education and digital marketing

The development of information technologies changed many aspects of people's lives. In particular, it is necessary to mention how the technology changed the way people educate themselves. Nowadays more and more people choose online education as an easy, safe and fast way of obtaining new skills and knowledge. The global online education market is booming and the business forecasts seem to be very promising.

For example, according to the report of Market Research Future the global online education industry will reach approximately USD 423 billion by 2023, at 24% CAGR between 2017 and 2023 (Sawant, 2018). The results of the Global Sourcing Intelligence LPP research show that the global online education market is going to witness a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.26% during the period 2017-2023 to reach a total market size of US\$286.62 billion by 2023 from US\$159.52 billion in 2017 (Global Online Education Market, 2018). And last but not the least, the report of Statistics MRC provided information that the Global E-Learning Market is about to reach \$275.10 billion by 2022 growing at a CAGR of 7.5% during the period 2017-2022. (Global E-Learning Market Research Report, 2017)

Even though the experts provide different estimations of the market size and growth, it is clear that the online education sector is growing at fairly colossal levels. There are several drivers of this rapid development.

Firstly, the smartphone ownership and internet usage keep increasing all around the world and especially in the emerging economies. The number of internet users in 2018 is 4.021 billion, it increased 7 percent year-on-year and the number keeps growing (Kemp, 2018).

Secondly, the advancement of the IT security and development of the cloud based solutions provided an opportunity to deliver the service in a safe, smooth and easy way (Global Online Education Market, 2018)

Thirdly, the increasing engagement in social networking and growing number of social media users are fueling the growth of online education, especially in the segment of online education apps and games (Sawant, 2018). The flexibility in learning, low cost, easy access and gamification of the learning process are very attractive for millennial users. This means that the companies in education industry should actively engage in providing online programs nowadays, otherwise they might miss the window of opportunity and lose the competition.

In order to reach the target audience and attract the potential clients it is important for the companies to use digital marketing in the right way. Online environment allows businesses to create successful, financially sound and targeted to a specific group advertising campaigns. The analytic instruments that are built in the social media platforms allow the companies to plan and monitor their marketing expenses online. This opportunity is essential for the small-to-medium enterprises (SME) that are limited in their marketing budgets and cannot afford costly marketing campaigns.

The right social media marketing and influencer marketing can help the companies to build up their brands, differentiate from the competitors and create long-term relationship with their clients. However, the world of social media is very competitive and with the increasing amount of messages the potential clients get insensitive to the information coming from different brands. Moreover, usually SMEs have to use their financial and human resources in the most efficient way, due to the shortage of both. Therefore, it is important to shed more light on the topic of the social media marketing and digital marketing planning for small-to-medium companies in order to help them to reach their marketing goals in the best way.

1.2 Company background

This thesis is focused on the case of a private Finnish company Transekspertti Oy. The company was established in 2015 and currently it provides online business education courses in English. The company operates mainly in the Southern Finland and provides services to the customers, that are interested in obtaining professional skills online. At the moment, Transekspertti Oy is successfully operating, the client base is growing mostly through the referral program and the current customers are satisfied with the quality of the products and services. The business strategy of the company is to expand on the Finnish market of online business education and then reach the international audience in the long-term perspective. However, the case company doesn't have a digital marketing strategy which could ensure the successful expansion on the market of online business education. Currently the company uses only search engine optimization and two social media platforms for marketing purposes: Facebook and Instagram. Hence, at this stage it is crucial for the company to define a digital and social media marketing strategy and create a simple and effective digital marketing plan in order to achieve the strategic goals.

1.3 Research questions

The research aim of this bachelor's thesis is to develop a digital marketing plan for the case company which would allow it to expand on the market of online business education in Finland.

In order to achieve the goal stated above it is necessary to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Which conceptual frameworks and models can be used by the company to create the digital marketing plan
- 2) Which digital marketing channels and instruments are currently being used successfully by the case company

- 3) How the case company should use digital marketing in order to expand on the market of online business education in Finland

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is organized in line with the IMRaD structure and consists of five main chapters. The first chapter is Introduction and it presents the research problem, managerial relevance of the research and generally describes the opportunities for online business education platforms in the age of active social media usage. The second chapter is dedicated to the description of the entire theoretical framework as well as the conceptual domains of digital, social media, influencer, and search engine marketing. This chapter also presents the models and frameworks that can be used for the marketing planning and describes SOSTAC model in more details. The third chapter is devoted to the description of the methodology of the research and the process of data collection. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the obtained information about the market and the case company, and the description of the main elements of the digital marketing plan. The fifth chapter is focused on the discussion of the digital marketing plan that was proposed in the previous chapter. The final chapter presents conclusion, managerial implications, limitations and future avenues for the research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Digital marketing

Even though digital marketing is a relatively new and evolving concept, it is crucial to define it properly in order to provide a foundation for the further analysis in this thesis. According to the Digital Marketing Institute, digital marketing can be defined as “the use of digital technologies to create an integrated, targeted and measurable communication which helps to acquire and retain customers while building deeper relationships with them” (Smith, 2007). Digital marketing involves applying digital technologies to support interactive marketing communication, profitable acquisition and retention of customers (Chaffey, 2010). The main difference between digital marketing and traditional marketing is that the former uses digital technologies that allow the companies to target, measure and facilitate the relationships between customers and firms, while the latter is much more mass communication oriented. The number of ways of building up the relationships and conversations with customers in digital environment is growing rapidly nowadays in response to the need for the more customized, personal communication (Alkhateeb, Clausen, Khanfar, & Latif, 2008).

Nowadays the customers choose to purchase online more often and eventually digital marketing campaigns are becoming more prevalent and efficient. The communication between customers and companies becomes more complex and requires more systematization. As soon as companies have to create the relationship with the clients in the highly competitive digital environment, many different methods of communication appeared during the last decades. For instance, digital marketing includes many different methods such as search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), content marketing, influencer marketing, data-driven marketing, e-commerce marketing, social media marketing, email direct marketing and others.

2.2 Social media marketing

Social media marketing can be defined as “an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media (often in combination with other communications channels) to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders” (Felix et al., 2017). Nowadays the concept of social media marketing is becoming more popular for both practitioners and researchers, although the terms of digital or online marketing are still dominant in academia. Social media marketing covers on a strategic level the decisions about social media marketing scope, culture, structure, and governance (Felix et al.,2017).

The increasing popularity of the social media marketing can be explained by the exponential growth of the number of social media users. According to the latest report of We Are Social the number of social media users in 2018 reached 3.196 billion, increasing 13 percent year-on-year (Kemp, 2018). One of the main factors that is fueling the growth of the number of social media users is the increasing number of mobile phone users. The research shows that more than two-thirds of the world’s population now has a mobile phone or a smartphone, in particular, the number of mobile phone users reached 5.135 billion in 2018, increasing 4 percent year-on-year (Kemp, 2018). Another factor is the increasing speed of the mobile connection. In fact, average mobile connection speeds increased by more than 30 percent over the past year. The increasing speed of mobile connection and the easy accessibility makes the smartphones the world’s preferred choice for going online and influences the time that average internet users spend online. According to the latest data from GlobalWebIndex the average internet user now spends around 6 hours each day using internet-powered devices and 135 minutes per day surfing social networks (Kemp, 2018). The increasing time and engagement of the potential clients makes the social media marketing campaigns one of the most important tools for building up relationship with the clients.

It is important to define the objectives of social media marketing in order to understand its role in the life of a company. Extant research states that increasing brand awareness, creating brand image, generating traffic websites, reducing marketing expenses, and creating user interactivity are the objectives of social media marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Bernoff & Li, 2008; Bianchi & Andrews, 2015; Schultz & Peltier, 2013). Along with these predominantly proactive objectives, companies can use social media marketing to analyze

how the consumers currently perceive the brands. The effectiveness of the social media marketing often depends on the type of the industry, type of the product and the roles that consumers already assigned to the certain companies (Corstjens & Umblijs, 2012). Which means that the goals of the social media marketing campaigns should be adjusted to the specific situation of the companies and aligned with the general marketing strategy. Obviously, the role of traditional marketing tools should not be undermined, because together with the social media marketing tool they create the synergistic effects (Ames, 2017).

2.3 Search engine marketing and optimization

Search engine marketing (SEM) is a form of Internet marketing that involves the promotion of websites by increasing their visibility in search engine results pages (SERPS) through optimization and advertising. SEM is a discipline that includes search engine optimization, paid search results and organic search results (Nabout and Skiera, 2012). The extant research shows that the order in which results are displayed on the search engines has a great impact on the brand equity of a company and significantly influences the brand perceptions among consumers (Drèze & Zufryden, 2004; McCoy, Everard, Polak, & Galletta, 2007; Rangaswamy et al., 2009).

Eventually the companies realized that the higher visibility on SE has a positive impact not only on the brand equity, but also on the revenue from sales (Dou et al., 2010; Skiera, Eckert, & Hinz, 2010) The importance of search engine marketing is growing in the highly competitive digital environment, this is why the companies need to use SEM and incorporate it in their marketing plans.

The most important SEM-based advertising activities are the following: SEO, targeted ad campaigns, copywriting using selective keywords, monitoring the advertising budget and measuring the effectiveness of campaign by KPIs such as like click-through-rates (CTR) and cost-per-click (CPC) (Digital Marketing Institute, 2018).

It is important to pay special attention to Search Engine Optimization (SEO), because it is one of the most effective instruments in the long-term perspective. According to Google's Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide (2013), SEO is a series of modifications and techniques, which make it easier for search engines to index and understand the content of a website. The goal of SEO process is to maximize the number of Internet visitors of a particular website by making the site appear high on the list of results returned by a search engine.

The report of Net Market Share shows that as of 2018 more than 72% of search traffic globally is going through Google. This is the reason why the most of the experts focus on the SEO specifically in Google, however, there are other search engines that operate globally and locally. For example, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, etc. (Search Engine Market Share, 2018). As soon as Google is frequently changing the search algorithm the SEO industry has to change as well and implement new On-Page and Off-Page activities.

In order to succeed in SEO process the companies have to create interesting and valuable user content, build up the external and internal links and optimize the titles of the web pages. The consistent work on the content of the website will eventually lead the website to the higher positions in the ranking. The big disadvantage of SEO is that this instrument doesn't bring the immediate results. It might take months or even years of consistent work before the website gets to the first SERP. However, it is effective in the long-term and definitely should be used by the companies together with the other instruments.

2.4 Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is becoming more popular nowadays and there are several reasons for it. Firstly, customers don't want to spend time on looking for the products that are perfect for them. Nowadays, potential customers prefer to watch a video on YouTube and listen to the opinion of a social media influencer regarding a certain products rather than compare the options on their own. Secondly, potential clients trust more the influencers rather than the brands, because subconsciously they believe that the influencers are not interested in promoting the certain products.

Certainly, the value of trust and influence over customers is not a novel concept in marketing. Brands were using product placement campaigns and engaging celebrities to advertise their product for years, however, the development of the social media environment allowed virtually everyone to become a social media influencer (Audrezet et al.,2018) The previous researchers define social media influencers (SMIs) as independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media (Freberg, 2011). It is crucial for the brands to understand how to engage the influencers and create healthy, productive and long-term relationship with them.

As online customer conversations continue to develop rapidly, digital influencers are playing an important role in breaking online clutter, building up meaningful customer dialogue and creating trust between brands and consumers In an age when potential clients have never been more interested in reviews, ratings, and word-of-mouth recommendations, social media influencers are the people who can start the conversation between the marketeers and customers. (Uzunoglu and Kip, 2014)

It is fair to say that the goal of influencer marketing is to maximize the impact of the collaborations between influencers and brands. In order to improve the brand perceptions and create the campaigns that look natural and trustworthy for the potential customers in social media environment, it is crucial for the marketeers to know how to choose the social media influencers with the right reach, relevance and resonance (Petrescu et al., 2018). Social media influencers can be divided in three groups by the number of their followers: micro, macro and mega influencers. The representatives of all three groups can be useful for brands, however, it is necessary to set up the right goals in the beginning of collaboration. As soon as the micro and macro influencers have less followers, the engagement rate in their blogs is usually higher, which can result in higher effectiveness of the social media campaigns. Mega influencers are being followed by thousands of people, which is why they can spread the message among a wide audience, however, the effectiveness of such campaign can be lower due to the lower level of engagement. (Erz et al.,2018)

Recently, the Federal Trade Commission made the rules for collaboration between social media influencers and brands more strict and obliged influencers to show whether there was a “material connection” between an endorser and advertiser. The Endorsement guide states that influencers have to disclose whether they received a monetary payment or a gift of free product from an advertiser by putting the relevant hashtags or mentioning it in the text (FTC, 2017).

Nowadays, there are many platforms that help to mediate the relationship between companies and social media influencers. For example, companies can find the right social media influencers and start the collaboration using such platforms as Tapinfluence, UpInfluence, Social Bakers, Famebit, etc. (Jackson, 2018)

2.5 Digital marketing planning

First of all, it is important to mention that digital marketing includes many different methods such as search engine optimization (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), content marketing, influencer marketing, social media marketing, etc. Therefore, the digital marketing plan includes different domains that are relevant for the company situation. As soon as the digital marketing plan is supposed to help the companies to achieve the strategic objectives, the main focus can be different in case of different companies. For instance, the companies that need to create brand awareness and relationship with the potential clients should mostly focus on social media marketing plan, while the ones that are interested in online customer acquisition can focus mostly on search engine marketing.

Secondly, it is crucial to highlight the difference between social media marketing and digital marketing plan. A social media marketing plan is relative and relevant to a digital marketing plan, however, it focuses on the customer, internal activities and resources that are necessary for creating the valuable content for sharing online (Tuten and Solomon, 2013). The main difference is that a social media marketing plan is adjusted to the specific constraints of social media channels (timing and text format) (LePage, 2014).

Thirdly, it is important to consider the business plan of a company when creating a digital marketing plan. The business plan describes the rationale and logic of an organization's integrated activities that create, deliver, and capture value (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010). Therefore, it is important to align the process of value creation that is described in the business plan with the one in the digital marketing plan.

2.6 SOSTAC model

There are many models and guidelines for creating a marketing plan in general. Most of them focus on the following steps: environmental analysis, internal analysis, marketing objectives, marketing strategy, implementation and performance evaluation (Pride & Ferrell, 2016). For the purpose of this thesis we are going to use the SOSTAC planning model created by PR Smith. It was chosen because of its simplicity and effectiveness, both of these factors are important for small-to-medium enterprises. Moreover, SOSTAC model is recommended for creating the digital marketing plans because it allows to take into consideration the specific aspects of marketing planning in digital environment.

SOSTAC Model

Situation
where are we?

Objectives
where do we need to go?

Strategy
how do we get there?

Tactics
Details of Strategy

Action
what is our plan?

Control
How did you do?



Figure 1. SOSTAC model (Smith, 2018)

The SOSTAC acronym stands for Situation analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). In order to use this model for creating a digital marketing plan for the case company it is important to describe the stages of the planning process in detail.

2.6.1 Situation analysis

Situation analysis is the first stage of SOSTAC planning model. At this stage the most important question to answer is “Where are we now”. Therefore, the marketers should evaluate the external situation using PEST analysis and Porter’s five forces when applicable. In case of digital marketing planning it is important to understand the position of the company in the digital environment. In order to evaluate the internal situation it is important to define the strengths and weaknesses of the company in terms of digital and social media marketing. It is also recommended to focus on core competences, dynamic capabilities, mission, vision

and values when evaluating the internal situation of the company as it is. After evaluating external and internal environment, it is important to set up the objectives.

2.6.2 Objectives

At the second stage of SOSTAC planning model the companies should set up the digital marketing objectives and answer the question “Where do we need to go”. It is recommended for the companies to set up SMART goals, which means that they should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (Doran, 1981). In order to set up these objectives the marketers can conduct a SWOT analysis. The SWOT acronym stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This tool is often used in order to define the business strategy of a company, however, it can be also applied for creating a digital marketing strategy. Conducting a SWOT analysis makes it possible to understand how the companies can use their strengths and opportunities in order to achieve their goals and minimize the danger coming from weaknesses and threats.

2.6.3 Strategy

The third step in the SOSTAC planning model is the Strategy and it helps the marketers to find an answers to the question “How do we get there”. First of all, at this stage the marketers should analyze the current market segmentation, targeting and positioning situation and adjust it according to the digital and social media environment reality (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Even though segmentation, targeting and positioning are seen as the elements of traditional marketing plan, it is very important to focus on them and find the target audience in digital environment. As the first step, marketers should define the bases for market segmentation and create the profiles for every segment. Afterwards, it is important to estimate the attractiveness of different segments and choose the target ones. As the last step, marketers should develop positioning for every segment and create a marketing mix. Using the information that was obtained at this step, it is possible to create digital marketing strategy, as well as social media marketing strategy, search engine marketing strategy and influencer marketing strategy.

2.6.4 Tactics

Tactics is the fourth stage of SOSTAC planning model. After the objectives and strategies were defined, it is important to answer the question “How exactly do we get there”. At this stage it is important to list specific tools and techniques that can be used in order to achieve objectives and realize the strategy. As soon as different parts of digital marketing such as social media marketing, influencer marketing, search engine marketing require different tools, it is important to focus on every field separately. Moreover, the social media platforms have their own specific rules and standards, which makes the tactics slightly different. It is important to keep it in mind in order to reach the target audience on different platforms in the most appropriate way.

2.6.5 Action

At this stage the plan has to be implemented and action has to be taken in order to achieve the objectives described earlier. This part of the SOSTAC planning model is devoted to creating a clear actionable plan that can be implemented by the employees of the company. Therefore, at this stage it is important to understand how the human resources of the company can be used in order to achieve the goals. Moreover, in case the company doesn't have sufficient resources for implementing the plan, it has to outsource particular activities or attract new resources. This is one of the most important parts of the planning process, because at this stage the final actionable plan should be created and implemented.

2.6.6 Control

At the last step of this process, marketers should control, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions that were taken. There are many instruments that allow the companies to estimate the effectiveness of their digital and social media marketing campaigns. one of the most popular tools for estimating the effectiveness of digital marketing is Google Analytics. This tools allows the companies to evaluate the conversion from the social media, direct search and other channels. Moreover, social media platforms offer built-in instruments for evaluating the engagement of the audience. Companies can also use the

external platforms for evaluating the performance of their social media accounts, for example, Livedune statistics.

Even though there are many tools available on the market, the evaluation of the social media marketing campaigns is a complicated issue. Keegan and Rowley (2017) created a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of campaign. Six steps of this process include: : setting evaluation objectives, identifying key performance indicators (KPIs), identifying metrics, data collection and analysis, report generation and management decision making (Keegan and Rowley, 2017). As soon as this step is very important, it requires special attention from the marketing managers who are responsible for the implementation of a social media marketing plan.

3 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

3.1 Methodology

In order to create the digital marketing plan it is necessary to collect the relevant information as the first step. First of all, it is important to describe the character of the information that has to be obtained. Normally, the researchers can use primary and secondary data for conducting the analysis. Secondary data can be obtained in public sources and it is usually relevant to many companies that are working in the same industry. Primary data is normally obtained by researchers through interviews and questionnaires and it is mostly relevant for the case company. Both primary and secondary data can be quantitative and qualitative. As the goal of this thesis is to create a digital marketing plan for a particular business company it is reasonable to focus mostly on obtaining the primary qualitative and quantitative data, that would allow the researcher to understand the specific features of the case company. Moreover, the segment of online business education in Finland is still developing, hence the quantitative secondary data is not publicly disclosed yet. Due to the financial and time constraints of this project the researcher made the decision to focus on the primary qualitative data as the main source of information.

The next step after collecting the data is creating the digital marketing plan using SOSTAC planning model. This model allows the researchers to use the collected information and analyze it gradually in order to create a simple and effective digital marketing plan. The purpose of this bachelor's thesis is to create a digital marketing plan that can be used by the company, therefore it is reasonable to focus mostly on the practical elements of the research rather than on the theoretical analysis of the secondary quantitative data.

3.2 Data collection

As the first step, more information about the company was collected in order to deepen the understanding of its current situation. The qualitative data was collected via semi-structured

interview with the founder of the company and analysis of the testimonials of the current clients. The transcript of the interview and the testimonials can be found in the Appendices.

The aforementioned interview with the founder of the company consisted of 12 open-ended questions, the responses were recorded and analyzed afterwards. At the preparation stage we tested whether it was easy for interviewee to understand the questions and give full, detailed, concise answer. It is important to avoid cognitive biases during the semi-structured interviews, therefore all questions were formulated in the most neutral way (Bernard, 2000). In order to make the interview sound more natural, the order of questions was carefully arranged. However, as the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to explore more about the subject, the opportunity to change the order of questions in the interview was provided for the interviewer. The primary qualitative data provided by the founder of the company allowed us to shed more light on the strategic goals, market segmentation and positioning, strengths and weaknesses of the case company.

As the second step, the competitor analysis was conducted in order to understand the position of the case company in digital environment. As the goal of the competitor analysis was to estimate the positioning and power of the competitors in the social media and digital environment, we gathered the data about the amount of followers and subscribers on different platforms. Information obtained during this stage allowed us to understand the positioning of the company relative to its competitors. Moreover, the analysis of the testimonials of the current clients shed more light on the customer perceptions of the case company. Testimonials that were written by the clients on different platforms were collected manually and analyzed. The table with testimonials is presented in Appendix 2. The combination of the information about the positioning of the company and the perceptions of the clients provided the sufficient basis for creating the digital marketing plan.

3.3 Ethical considerations

It is important to describe the measures that were taken in order to address the ethical considerations during the process of collecting the data (Bryman and Bell, 2007) Firstly, it was explained to the interviewee that the research is being conducted as a part of the bachelor's thesis. Secondly, sufficient information about the purpose of the study was provided to the respondent. Thirdly, the interviewee made the decision to participate voluntarily and granted the permission to use the materials for the purpose of this thesis. However, as soon as the thesis is going to be published in open sources, the founder of the company agreed to disclose only information that can't be used by competitors against the company.

As a researcher, the author is morally obliged to proceed with the study using techniques that minimize potential harm to participants of the study (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). At the stage of preparation of the interview questionnaire, extra precautions were taken in order to avoid the situations of potential disclosure of confidential information. The research design and methodology are in compliance with the principles of qualitative research ethics. The study was not funded by case company or any other financial sources. Therefore, the study has met the criteria of ethical consent.

3.4 Limitations

First of all, as soon as only qualitative data was collected it is not possible to estimate the general trends and situation on the market of online business education in Finland. This is limiting the researchers at the stage of situation analysis, however, it is not significantly affecting the results of this bachelor's work. Moreover, only the primary qualitative data was collected for the purpose of this research, this information might not be relevant for other companies. However, the purpose of this thesis is to create the digital marketing plan for the case company, thus the information is not supposed to be relevant for the other companies. Last but not the least, due to the time and financial constraints of this project the semi-structured interview was conducted only with the founder of the company, therefore, the information is reflecting the perception of the situation of only one individual. In the future,

the interviews with the current clients, suppliers and partners can be conducted in order to get more sufficient information for developing the full picture of the company.

4 DIGITAL MARKETING PLAN

4.1 Situation analysis

Situation analysis is the first stage of SOSTAC planning model. At this stage the most important question to answer is “Where are we now”. As the goal of this thesis is to develop the digital marketing plan, we will focus mostly on the positioning of the case company in the digital environment. Therefore, the classic tools such as PEST analysis or Porter’s five forces analysis that are normally used for evaluation of the external environment are not applicable in case of this work. However, the competitor analysis and SWOT analysis would help us to shed light on the current situation of the case company, hence, these two instruments should be used at this stage.

4.1.1 Competitor analysis

It is possible to define two types of competitors on the market of online business education: content providers and service providers. Usually content providers are focusing on making a course that doesn’t require an active engagement from the side of the educator. During such courses the students can get the feedback, but the most of the information is given through the video or written presentation. Often the content providers are bigger organizations or universities that create the special online courses to diversify their portfolios. Meanwhile, the service providers focus more on the learning experience that the students get during the course. The engagement of the educator is much higher, the course is mostly structured around one person and his or her special skills. Usually service providers are the individuals that achieved high level of success in a certain area and can share their experience with the others. Obviously, it’s hard to separate these players because both sides provide content and services to the certain extent, however, the main focus helps us to differentiate representatives of these two groups.

Both content and service providers are presented on the market of online business education in Finland. It is possible to state that universities and business schools that provide online courses as well as such companies as Interaction.fi can be taken as the content providers. While Esiintymisvalmennus ILO, Bisneskoulu and Ammattijohtaja.fi are mostly focusing on the skills that individuals can learn from the educators, therefore, these companies can be referred to service providers. During the interview with the founder of the case company it was revealed that personal branding and the personal engagement with the students during the course play an important role in the process of the business value creation (Appendix 1). Therefore, we will mostly focus on other service providers on the market as the competitors. As soon as the competitors have similar position in the SEO ranking, it is important to estimate their social media power.

In order to understand better the social media power of the competitors, it is important to estimate the follower base and the ratings. We focused on Facebook, Instagram and Youtube because these platforms are the most popular for sharing the educational content and building the personal brand. Moreover, these three platforms were mentioned by the founder of the case company in the interview (Appendix 1). The results of the analysis are presented in the table below.

Company name	Number of Facebook followers	Facebook Rating	Number of Instagram followers	Number of Youtube subscribers
Esiintymisvalmennus ILO	1239	No info	514	5
Bisneskoulu	1706	5 out of 5	167	161
Ammattijohtaja.fi	1674	4,9 out of 5	95	62

Table 1. Information about social media accounts of competitors

It is possible to notice that the majority of the competitors are mostly active only on Facebook, their pages in Instagram and Youtube have significantly less followers. In order to understand whether their social media strategies are reasonable it is important to get the information about the popularity of different social media platforms in Finland. According to

Statista report 53 percent of 15-74 individuals in Finland used Facebook and Facebook Messenger daily in 2018. The third most used application daily in 2018 was Youtube at 30 percent, followed by Instagram at 26 percent (Statista, 2018). The information about other platforms is presented in the image below. These results show us that almost the third of the Finnish population is using Instagram and Youtube, however, competitors are almost not present at both of these platforms. This provides the case company with an opportunity to differentiate from the competitors and engage with the potential customers on Youtube and Instagram.

Share of daily social media usage Finland in 2018

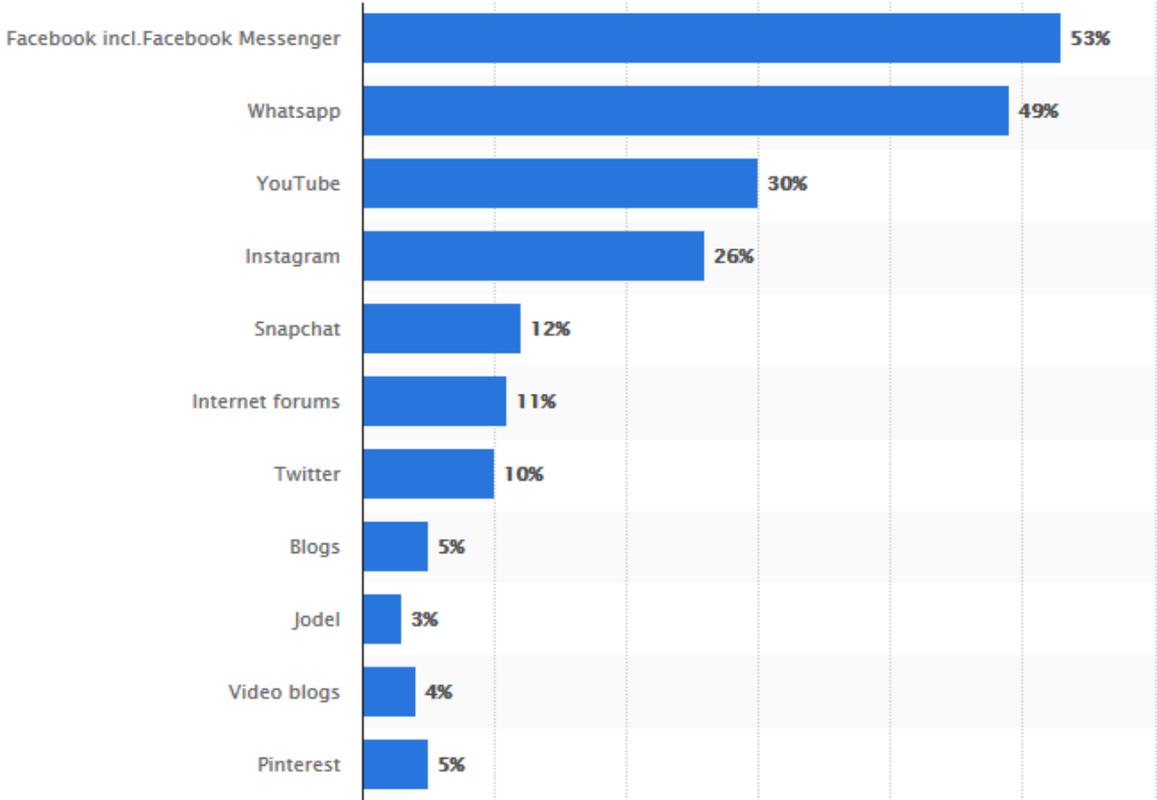


Figure 1. Share of daily social media usage Finland in 2018 (Statista, 2018)

4.1.2 SWOT analysis

In order to create the digital marketing strategy for the case company it is important to conduct the SWOT analysis. It would help to understand strong and weak sides of the company as well as the opportunities and threats that are present in the external environment (Wood, 2014). As a result, it would be possible to create a sound digital marketing strategy that would focus on using the strong sides of the company and opportunities on the market and overcoming the threats and weaknesses of the company.

Based on the information that was provided to us during the interview with the founder of the company and the analysis of the external environment, it is possible to define strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the table below.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong personal brand of the founder of the company - Practical courses aimed to help clients to obtain specific skills - Reasonable prices - High loyalty of the clients - Efficient customer relationship management 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of the courses in Finnish language - Limited amount of the employees - The growth of the company depends solely on the amount of time and effort that the founders invest
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing penetration and engagement in social media environment - Competitors are not actively involved in social media marketing - Increasing demand for online educational services - The market of online business education in Finland is still developing and growing 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The labour legislation is complex in Finland and is not very supportive towards the small business owners - High salaries in Finland - Complex hiring process - Danger of market penetration from global market leaders in online business education

Table 2. SWOT analysis for the case company

4.2 Objectives

Based on the information that resulted from the situational analysis, it is possible to define the digital marketing objectives for the case company. It is important to mention that in order to set up the objectives in the right way we should check whether they are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). It is reasonable to choose the January 2019 as the starting point for implementing the social media marketing strategy because of the case company preferences and time constraints. The objectives can be defined in the following way:

- 1) Increase the amount of followers in Instagram by 150% by the end of 2019
- 2) Increase the amount of likes, comments and savings by 20% by the end of 2019
- 3) Create channel in YouTube devoted to the topic of online business education
- 4) Achieve the mark of 5000 YouTube subscribers by the end of 2019
- 5) Increase the amount of followers on Facebook by 50% by the end of 2019
- 6) Improve the ratings in Facebook and collect more comments from the followers
- 7) Collaborate with the most popular Finnish bloggers in the area of business education
- 8) Become the most popular social media blog about online business education in Finland
- 9) Increase the website conversion by 3% from the social media channels by the end of 2019
- 10) Reach the first search engine results page by the end of 2019 in the category of online business education in Finland and online business courses in Finland

To define how exactly the objectives stated above are going to be achieved it is necessary to focus on the strategy that would show how the company is going to reach the goals.

4.3 Strategy

4.3.1 Segmentation, targeting and positioning

One of the most important steps in creating a sound marketing strategy is the definition of the target audience. That is why it is crucial to properly describe the segmentation, targeting and positioning of the case company in the social media environment.

Segmentation

The pool of potential clients who might be interested in obtaining new business skills online is pretty diverse. However, based on the interview with the founder of the case company it was possible to define the characteristics of the target audience (Appendix 1). Firstly, the case company is providing the courses for the individuals, therefore, it is focused on the B2C rather than B2B online education market. Secondly, it is crucial to describe the demographic factors that are important for the segmentation. The age and occupation would play an important role as soon as these factors influence the intention of the potential clients to take part in the online education program. Thirdly, it is important to mention the psychological factors that differentiate the representatives of one segment from another. For instance, the motivation to learn new skills, openness to new experiences and dedication to the personal growth can be used as three most important factors that define the representatives of the target group. Last but not the least, we should mention the geographic constraints, as soon as currently the case company is focused on the market of online business education in Finland.

Targeting

Based on the information provided by the founder of the company and the analysis of the testimonials, two target groups were defined.

The first group can be called “**Career Builders**”. The potential clients in this group are the individuals who are working in the companies, building up their careers and lacking some important business skills. They might be both male and female, because the representatives of both genders are likely to encounter the difficulties with obtaining the new skills. They are living and working in Finland and they are 25-45 years old. They are open to new experiences, want to learn new professional skills to climb higher in the career ladder or change their occupation. They are using social media networks for learning new things and staying in touch with their friends.

The representatives of the second group are solo entrepreneurs, startup founders, freelancers, creative and service professionals who are lacking important skills for developing their own business. This target group can be called “**Business developers**”. Usually, representatives of

these group don't have formal business background (degree from a business school, courses, etc), they highly value their time and they need to obtain only the skills that can be applicable in their businesses. Mainly they are interested in learning about marketing, accounting, business administration. They are 25-45 years old, live and do business in Finland and they are fluent in English. They are using social media for marketing their businesses and for the personal reasons.

Positioning

The case company should establish a strong position of an expert in the field of online business education. The company should be seen by the representatives of both "Career Builders" and "Business Developers" groups as the expert that would help them to obtain new professional skills, develop their career and business, change their lives and occupation. However, it is important to mention, that the authority of the case company should not be hostile. It is important to establish the relationship with the potential clients, therefore, the company should focus on creating an image of trustworthy, open and helpful service provider.

4.3.2 Social Media Marketing strategy

To reach the social media objectives that were listed above it is necessary to define a sound social media marketing strategy that would show how exactly the company is going to reach the goals. First of all, the case company should focus on creating engaging, useful and interesting content for the followers. The analysis of the latest trends in social media environment shows that nowadays the video content gets more and more engagement comparing to the photo or textual content (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, in order to get more likes, reposts and comments the case company has to create interactive video content for Instagram TV(IGTV), Youtube and Facebook, stories in Instagram and Facebook. It is important to be consistent and persistent when it comes to the social media environment, therefore, it is better to use the tools for social media planning and schedule the posts in advance. Nowadays, it is hard to obtain new followers through the natural search and hashtags, that is why the case company has to use the advertising on Instagram, Facebook and

Youtube (Gilbert, 2018). This is the primary source of the new followers, however, it is one of the most expensive ways to grow the follower base. Another way to do this is to collaborate with the influencers, start the marathons, take part in giveaways and other activities that are aimed to increase the amount of followers in the accounts. The collaboration activities in social media would allow the case company to get access to the target audience and inspire representatives of both groups to become followers.

4.3.3 Influencer Marketing strategy

As was mentioned above the usage of advertising in social media environment can be expensive and not always effective. The followers are getting less sensitive to the advertising and tend to pay less attention to the ads than before. However, people still trust the bloggers and influencers whom they are following, that is why it is important to collaborate with influencers in order to increase the follower base (Erz et al., 2018).

As the first step, it is important to choose the social media influencers with the right reach, relevance and resonance (Petrescu et al., 2018). In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the case company can collaborate mostly with macro and mega influencers to ensure the coverage of a wider audience. However, the special campaigns can be organized with the micro influencers as well on the non-paid basis. It is recommended to establish long-term relationship with the influencers and create more interactive content together, such as stories, IGTV videos, marathons and giveaways. The goal is to create the value for the followers and convince them that the case company is an expert in the field of online business education and in this way maximize the impact of the collaborations between influencers and the case company.

Nowadays, there are many platforms that help to mediate the relationship between companies and social media influencers. For example, the case company can find the right social media influencers and start the collaboration using such platforms as Tapinfluence, UpInfluence, Social Bakers, Famebit, etc. (Jackson, 2018)

4.3.4 Search Engine Marketing strategy

In order to reach the first search engine results page by the end of 2019 the case company has to focus on creating relevant, new and interesting content on the website and using Google advertising. According to the information provided by the founder of the company the cost-per-click is relatively high in Finland. Cost-per-click is the actual price that the user pays for every customer click during the advertising campaigns. The actual cost-per-click is calculated automatically by Google Ads using information about the bids of competitors and quality of the companies advertising (Kim, 2018). High cost-per-click makes it impossible to rely only on the Google advertising and forces the companies to invest more in content optimization. The consistent creation of the content, using the keywords, ensuring the possibility to share the content on the social media platforms and building up the links with the relevant websites would improve the ratings of the website. Moreover, it is important to start sharing content written in Finnish because then it will be seen as more relevant for the country. The version of the website written in Finnish should be created and optimized. Eventually the search engine optimization would help the case company to reach the first search engine ranking page (SERP) and gain more credibility and trust this way.

4.4 Tactics

In order to implement the strategy and achieve the goals that were set up for 2019 it is crucial to define concrete steps that the case company should use in the future. As soon as every social media platform has specific differences, the tools are going to be different. The list of possible tactics for every potentially useful social network is presented below. The tactics for engaging the influencers and search engine optimization are listed in the end of this part as well. Using these tactics would allow the case company to reach both target groups and position itself as a competent expert that is able to provide useful and specific courses to them.

4.4.1 Facebook

As it was stated earlier, the objective of the case company is to increase the amount of followers on Facebook by 50% by the end of 2019 and improve the ratings in Facebook by collecting more comments from the followers. In order to achieve these objectives the case company should use the tactics that are described in the table below. The tactics are separated in two categories: “Basic” and “Advanced”. This allows to highlight the tactics that are easy and absolutely necessary to implement and the ones that are more complicated and important in the long-term perspective.

Level	Tactics
Basic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Consistently create interesting and engaging content and post it at least 3 times a week 2) Create photo and video content to illustrate the stories of successful students ad inspire more potential clients to educate themselves 3) Answer the comments and actively engage in conversation with the potential clients 4) Use hashtags to attract more potential clients to the Facebook page, for example, #businesseducationfinland #businessscourses #businessinfinland etc. 5) Answer as fast as possible to the direct messages in order to show high level of responsiveness to the potential clients 6) Fill information about the working hours, price level, contact details, history of the company and share the photos in order to establish trust from the very beginning of the relationship with the potential client
Advanced	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organize marathons, giveaways and other activities to create more awareness about the brand and get more interactions with the social media users 2) Collaborate with the other companies that are providing services to the same target audience and run campaigns together 3) Create the targeted campaigns and measure the effectiveness using the analytic tools built in the Facebook platform

Table 3. Tactics for marketing in Facebook

4.4.2 Instagram

The objective of the case company is to increase the amount of followers in Instagram by 150% by the end of 2019 and increase the amount of likes, comments and savings by 20% by the end of 2019. These objectives are challenging, however, they can be achieved if the tactics described in the table below are to be implemented. Moreover, it is important to mention that Instagram platform provides a very dynamic and active environment, which allows the companies grow exponentially (Kaplan et al., 2010). Hence, the growth on this platform can be very rapid and intense.

Level	Tactics
Basic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Optimize the description in the bio and ensure that unique sales proposition is written clearly within 150 symbols 2) Create interesting and engaging photo and video content and share it at least 5 times per week during the prime-time hours 3) Use stories and IGTV videos to share more personal information about the founders of the company, students and courses 4) Actively answer the comments and motivate the followers to answer the questions, save the posts and tag their friends in the comments 5) Keep the photo and video editing style consistent to make the feed look more organized 6) Combine useful, interesting and funny posts in order to entertain the followers and make them feel curious about the upcoming posts 7) Use up to 30 hashtags under every post in order to appear in the recommended posts for the potential clients
Advanced	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organize giveaways, marathons and other interactive activities to expand the follower base 2) Collaborate with the other brands that are providing services to the same target audience 3) Use targeted advertising in the news feed and in the Instagram stories 4) Engage in the “like time” activities organized by other bloggers to improve the engagement

Table 4. Tactics for marketing in Instagram

4.4.3. Youtube

The objectives of the case company is to create channel in YouTube devoted to the topic of online business education and achieve the mark of 5000 YouTube subscribers by the end of 2019. This is a new social media channel for the case company, therefore the objective is set up on a reasonably low level. If the tactics described in the table below are to be implemented, then these objectives would be achieved.

Level	Tactics
Basic	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Consistently create useful and engaging video content and post a video at least once a week2) Focus on the educational and fun content as soon as the viewers usually look for these two types of videos3) Answer the comments and actively engage in the conversation with the viewers4) Insert the links to the website and other platforms to make it easier for the viewers to know more about the courses5) Motivate the viewers to subscribe and watch the videos consistently as the frequent exposure increases the likeability and the probability of the course purchase6) Make the videos with successful students and tell their inspiring stories
Advanced	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Create the videos together with the other companies that are offering the services and products to the same target audience2) Take part in the marathons and other global interactive activities, e.g. “Ice bucket challenge” to attract new viewers to the channel3) Use the Youtube advertising and target the local viewers who are interested in business education

Table 5. Tactics for marketing in YouTube

4.4.4. Influencer engagement

The objective of the case company is to collaborate with the most important Finnish bloggers in the area of business education. All three social media platforms have different influencers

that already obtained a significant follower base. As soon as the influencer behave in a similar way in Instagram, Facebook and Youtube it is possible to define the common tactics for collaborating with them. Firstly, it is recommended to be very specific when it comes to the choice of the right influencer. The reputation of the influencer would be associated with the image of the case company brand. That is why the case company should pay special attention to the first step and choose the influencers carefully. Secondly, the case company can invite the business and career influencers to take part in the courses and become the ambassadors of the case company. Thirdly, the case company should establish long-term, productive and fruitful collaborations with the social media influencers because these way both parties can create interesting and engaging content together. Moreover, the case company can create special interactive activities in order to engage the follower base of the social media influencers and expand the amount of followers in the company accounts. Last but not the least, it is important to measure the effectiveness of campaigns and return on investment manually or using one of the tools for working with social media influencers.

4.4.5 Search Engine Optimization

The objective of the case company is to increase the website conversion by 3% from the social media channels by the end of 2019 and reach the first search engine results page by the end of 2019 in the category of online business education in Finland and online business courses in Finland. Search engine optimization is the instrument that shows the results only in the long-term perspective. However, if the tactics that are described below are to be implemented by the case company, then the objectives might be achieved by the end of 2019.

Level	Tactics
Basic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Optimize the names and taglines of the pages of the case company website 2) Add the description and meta tags to the photo and video content on the website 3) Build the mutual links with the educational business websites in Finland in order to improve the rankings of the website 4) Register the business address and ask the clients to leave the testimonials in order to show the activity in Google

	5) Register the website in the most popular in Finland search engine machines in order to ensure that the process of optimization has started
Advanced	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Consistently create relevant, new and interesting content on the website using the keywords and links to the other sources 2) Use targeted advertising in Google and measure the effectiveness of the campaigns

Table 6. Tactics for search engine optimization

4.5 Action

During the interview with the founder of the case company we found out that currently the human resources are limited. There are only two people who can be working on implementing the social media marketing plan, including the founder of the company. In order to ensure the consistency and high quality of social media content the case company should devote at least 15-20 hours of work weekly. If the founders of the company are not able to dedicate this amount of time to the implementation of the plan, then this activity should be partly outsourced. The creation of the social media content and social media optimization can be done by the freelance specialists in social media marketing(SMM). Collaboration with the influencers can be managed through the specialized platforms that help the companies to find the right influencers and build up relationship with them, such as Social Bakers, TapInfluence, Famebit, etc. Search engine optimizations and marketing can be outsourced to the freelancers as there are many specialists in this field who are working online.

The situation of shortage of human resources is typical for the small-to-medium enterprises. However, it is crucial to solve this problem in order to achieve the social media marketing objectives.

4.6 Control

Finally, it is important to describe the procedures that are going to help the case company to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken in order to implement the social media

marketing plan. Firstly, the effectiveness of the campaigns in social media platforms can be evaluated by the tools built in the platforms. It is possible to see the statistics and control the growth of the amount of followers, comments, likes, savings and other interactions with the content. Moreover, there are more sophisticated tools like LiveDune and Facebook Pixel that the case company can use in order to get broader information about the engagement in social media platforms. LiveDune and Facebook Pixel are online platforms that collect the data from Instagram and Facebook and provide more detailed reports for the companies. The success of the influencer marketing is harder to measure, however, it is possible to do it manually. For example, by giving the special codes as a part of the referral programme. Last but not the least, the effectiveness of search engine optimization and marketing can be measure with the Google analytics tools. This system is proven to be clear, simple and very precise, therefore, there is no need to use other external tools.

5 DISCUSSION

It is important to begin the discussion by showing the alignment of the theoretical concepts and the practical results that were described in the previous chapter. First of all, as it was suggested, the SOSTAC planning model proved to be the excellent tool for creating a digital marketing plan. The detailed description of the steps in the theoretical part helped to shed more light on the necessary procedures and prevented the researcher from committing mistakes. As the result, the sound and simple digital marketing plan was created, precise tactics were described for every social media platform and digital marketing tool. Secondly, the precise information about digital, social media, influencer and search engine marketing provided us with the opportunity to control whether all possible tools have been used for creating a digital marketing plan. Deep understanding of these conceptual domains allowed us to create a digital marketing plan that is specific and adapted for the needs of the case company.

In order to ensure the success of the implementation of the digital marketing plan it is important to check whether all elements are aligned with each other. Firstly, the situation analysis helped us to understand that the competitors are almost not present in Instagram and Youtube while these two networks are one of the top five most popular social media platforms in Finland. This information combined with the insights provided by the founder of the case company during the semi-structured interview allowed us to define the social media marketing objectives. Moreover, the digital marketing objectives were created in line with the social media marketing objectives to maximize the effect of the digital marketing planning. At this step, we aligned information about the case company strengths and opportunities on the market as well as the weaknesses and threats in order to set up specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound objectives.

After completing these first two steps it was crucial to understand how to achieve these objectives. In order to create a sound strategy it is important to understand the target audience and the positioning of the case company. Two target segments were defined, it was clear that they have many commonalities, however, the representatives of these two groups pursue

different goals. According to the words of the case company founder the career builders are willing to develop new skills in order to succeed at work, while the business developers are focused on obtaining the relevant business skills in order to achieve success with their businesses. However, the positioning of the company remains the same in case of both target groups as the goal is to establish the image of a professional and reliable online education provider. After defining the target audience specific strategies for social media platforms, influencer engagement and search engine optimization were created.

The last two steps that actually require that action from the company were described in details as well. The current internal situation of the company was analyzed and the conclusion was that in order to implement the plan it is recommended for the founder of the case company to hire the part-time freelancers. Moreover, a number of tools for controlling and implementing the plan were suggested in order to optimize the workflow of the case company. As the result of this work, the simple and clear social media marketing plan was developed for the case company. It can be implemented in 2019 and through this the case company would achieve higher results and expand on the market on online business education in Finland and globally in the long-term perspective. This plan can be adjusted after getting the information about the effectiveness of the planned actions. The results of the research are in line with the key conceptual domains of the theoretical framework, which ensures the value of the created digital marketing plan.

6 CONCLUSION

The market of online education is growing at incremental pace as more people choose interactive, agile and effective ways of obtaining the necessary skills. In the same time the development of new technologies allows the companies to market their products and services in the new ways. The competition in the digital environment is getting more intense because the companies are fighting for the attention and loyalty of the potential clients. In the situation like this it is crucial for the companies nowadays to have an effective digital marketing plan. It is especially important to have it for the small-to-medium businesses because they should use their human and financial resources in the most efficient way.

The research aim of this bachelor thesis was to create a digital marketing plan for a case company that provides online business education in Finland. In order to reach this goal it was necessary to find the answers to the research questions. Firstly, the analysis of the information about digital, social media, influencer and search engine marketing and marketing planning was conducted. Based on the findings and the experience of the previous researchers the best conceptual framework for digital marketing planning was chosen, namely, the SOSTAC model. All stages of SOSTAC planning model were carefully described and explained in order to ensure the correct implementation of the model for the case company.

Secondly, it was crucial for the purpose of the research to understand which tools have been successfully used by the case company till this point. Therefore, the methodology of the research was carefully described and the most appropriate instruments for collecting the necessary data were chosen. In order to deepen our understanding of the current situation of the case company, we collected the qualitative data via semi-structured interview with the founder of the case company and analysis of the client testimonials. Afterwards, all steps described in the SOSTAC model were taken in order to create a sound and simple digital marketing plan for the case company.

Thirdly, using the SOSTAC model it was possible to find an answer to the last research question and describe how the case company should use digital marketing in order to expand

on the market of online business education in Finland. Based on the information that was collected, the situation analysis showed that the case company has a good potential to expand in Instagram and Youtube and differentiate in this way from the competitors. The objectives were created for the year 2019 and even though they are challenging for the case company they are still achievable. The strategy and tactics were described precisely in order to ensure the possibility to reach the digital marketing goals. Moreover, at the step of planning the action and control additional measures were suggested in order to provide a company with the opportunity to implement the plan. In conclusion, it is important to mention that the research aim was achieved and all research questions were answered within the course of this study.

The importance of this research should not be underestimated. Firstly, it is important to emphasize the managerial relevance of the results of this work. Using the digital marketing plan that was created for the case company the founder can achieve significant results and increase the amount of the clients in 2019. Moreover, despite the fact that this plan was created for the case company specifically, the similar structure can be used by other small-to-medium business owners in order to structure their social media marketing approach. Therefore, this work can be used not only by the case company, but also by the similar companies that are interested in the social media marketing expansion.

Of course, the research is not without limitations. As soon as the author of this bachelor thesis had financial and time constraints it was not possible to obtain more information about the market of online business education in Finland. This information is collected only by the research agencies and requires the special access. Moreover, only the qualitative data was analyzed for the purpose of this research, which means that the insights that could have been obtained during the analysis of the quantitative data are not present in this work. However, it is important to mention that for the purpose of creation of the digital marketing plan the in-depth analysis of the quantitative data was not necessary.

The further research can be focused on creating the digital marketing plans that can be used by the companies for expanding globally in the social media environment. More information about the possible future avenues for the research can be obtained after the case company

starts implementing the plan. This would show the obstacles and limitations that can be analyzed by the researchers in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Transcription of the interview with CEO and Founder of Transekspertti Oy

Veronika: Can you please tell me about the mission and vision of your company?

CEO: Of course. Well, our company is providing online business courses for people who want to obtain professional skills in a fast, easy and efficient way. We truly believe that nowadays people should keep learning even after they graduate from schools or universities. The world is changing very fast and we people have to adjust, learn new skills, make themselves better every day. However, not always they have time to do it. That's why we decided to create online courses and provide people with an opportunity to learn, grow and develop themselves without leaving the house.

Veronika: It sounds really inspiring! Are there many companies like yours that are providing the online business courses in Finland?

CEO: Honestly, there are not so many of them which is good for us. Recently, some of the universities and business school realized that there is huge potential in online learning. So, now I see more and more programs that are created on the basis of such institutions. Also, I see some people who are teaching their skills to others. Right now it is much easier to spread a word about yourself in social media and show that you are good at marketing, for example, and then sell the courses with you. Everybody can do it.

Veronika: That's right. So, do you think that the competition on this market is very high?

CEO: I think it is still not very high in Finland, however, the European market seems to be more competitive to me. That's why we want to focus first on the Finnish market and then expand overseas. We are currently providing the courses in English and we plan to launch the courses in Finnish as well.

Veronika: Sounds good. How do you reach your target audience currently?

CEO: Right now we are using SEO and social media to reach our target audience. Obviously, we also rely on viral marketing and word-of-mouth, but these channels are less reliable and it's harder to measure their effectiveness. The majority of our clients find us because of the ads in Facebook or Google, sometimes they also come from the Instagram.

Veronika: Do you mostly use search engine marketing or social media marketing?

CEO: We use both, but they bring different results. For example, search engine optimization is pretty expensive in Finland. The price per click goes up to 50 cents and the level of the website conversion is only 2 % which means that we need to spend a lot on the Google ads. In social media we are trying to build up a dialogue with our potential clients. Some of them follow us for months before making a decision about the purchase. We share the stories of our successful students who obtained a new skill and climbed up the career ladder or started freelancing and changed their occupation completely. We like to inspire people to think bigger and see how our courses can actually change their lives.

Veronika: I see, and do you think that Facebook works better than Instagram in case of your company?

CEO: It's hard to say, we share different content on two platforms. In Instagram we show more lifestyle content and build the personal brand. People want to see who is going to teach them and Instagram is perfect for sharing more personal information in a creative way. Facebook is a bit more formal, however, as I said we share a lot of information there about the students and the process of learning during our classes. Even though people study on their own, they still want to be the part of our community, exchange news and share the journey with others.

Veronika: Do you have any difficulties when it comes to marketing the courses online?

CEO: Well, of course. As I said earlier, the price per click in Finland is pretty high, it is expensive to use Google ads. We try to do more in social media and work with influencers, but there are not many successful bloggers in Finland. Especially, successful business bloggers, it is very hard to find them. That's another problem. One more thing is that our human and time resources are limited as our company is still young and small. Therefore, we

don't have enough time to be present on all platforms all the time. For example, we want to start our Youtube channel and become more active on this platform, but it's hard to find time for it.

Veronika: How do you measure the effectiveness of your social media and search engine campaigns?

CEO: We use Facebook Pixel to measure the effectiveness of campaigns in Facebook and Google analytics to measure the effectiveness of SEO.

Veronika: Okay, coming back to more positive things, do you see many opportunities for your business on the market?

CEO: Yes, I do. Nowadays, people want to learn and it is a long-term positive trend. People want to get new skills, change their careers, try new things in life. There are not many courses like ours on the Finnish market and it's a big opportunity for us. The competition on European market is higher, however, we believe that we can provide high quality content to our students and we can compete globally.

Veronika: That's good, what are the strong sides and competitive advantages of your company?

CEO: I have pretty strong personal brand and it is one of the key assets of the company. Moreover, our courses are very practical and specialized. For example, if you want to learn how to set up targeting in Facebook, you would come to study at our platform. We don't make the courses that are not applicable in real life. All the skills that people obtain are really useful and they learn how to solve the problems in real life. Our content is very practical, narrow and goal-oriented.

Veronika: What about the weak sides and the possible threats to your company?

CEO: Well, as a weak side I can name the absence of the courses in Finnish which limits our target audience. Even though people in Finland speak English very well, it is still a language barrier and we believe that adding a new language would help us to provide even more quality. As for the threats, it might be difficult for us to find employees in the future because

the labour legislation is very complex and the salaries are high. It's hard for small business owners to hire employees and as a results we are taking more and more responsibility and work longer and longer hours. I wish we could do it differently. Another threat might be coming from the Finnish competitors. As soon as the Finnish customers prefer to buy from local companies run by Finnish owners, there is a chance that our courses will not be seen as very attractive. However, this threat will be definitely eliminated when we expand to European market.

Veronika: How many people are working in your company right now?

CEO: Only two people. It's a family business.

Appendix 2. The testimonials of the current clients

Name	Testimonial
Lena M.	Amazing projects for the beginners! Highly recommend!
Sakkari L.	Thank you very much for this project! You made it very professionally and put thought in every detail, I really appreciate your approach!
Kate B.	It's the best course I've ever taken in my life! Seriously, there is so much useful content, I can apply everything I learned already today, thank you very much!
Sasha K.	This course really works! I was surprised to see the results so soon, thank you for making it so specialized and useful.
Mark L.	A couple of months ago I found this course online and decided to participate. I could never imagine that after taking this course I would actually be able to become a freelancer and change my life completely. I'm very grateful for all the support and trust that you given to me!
Liza A.	Thank you for a very inspiring course! Now I can do so much more on my own and I feel like an expert, this is an amazing feeling, thank you!