

Gertrude Ngwing Atah

IMPROVING MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS FOR AASIAN
SAASTO MARKET OY

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IMPROVING THE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS FOR AASIAN SAASTO MARKET OY VIA FACEBOOK

Atah Gertrude Ngwing

Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulu, Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

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The purpose of this thesis was to find out how creating and running a facebook page for a small oriental shop here in Rovaniemi called Aasian Saasto Market Oy will curtail the gap between the shop and its customers thereby improving the marketing communications. Most importantly was to improve the communication level via organic use of facebook by positioning the shop at the top level in the customers mind as against its competitors and compare the impacts it's got on the sales. The plan was executed within a time frame of approximately 8 weeks. By monitoring similar facebook pages, their contents and then doing same for the shop and also observation at the shop every other day. At the end of which some few simple questions were asked in the form of a short interview with some 30 customers to determine the co relationship between their satisfaction level and spending habit, which will determine overall customer equity rate.

The facebook page idea came about from the author's personal experience at the oriental shop as a customer. There was hardly ever information about the on-going activities, like when to expect new arrivals, opening hours/days nor an address of where the shop is located. This meant most of the time there were shortages of the products ordered either due to the fact that there was limited stock or because there was no information about new arrivals. So during this period the author decided to improve the flow of information between the shop and its customers via social media, specifically creating a facebook page for the shop, updating the customers with a minimum of 2 posts a week and see the impact it will have on the marketing communications and thus the image of the shop.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Finland has seen a massive influx of immigrants as of recent. A total number of 31950 according to the Finnish statistics in 2014 as against 25650 persons in 2010. With a population growth rate of 76% for the net immigrants for the year. As if that was not high enough, according to statistics from yle news, the rate of asylum seekers in the month of August was the highest ever seen, with a total number of 2894 people, with the biggest groups from Iran, Somalia and Afghanistan. Same statistic show the number of positive decision rate granted to them as 56%, 72% and 48% respectively. Recently from the news Uusi Rovaniemi, SPR (Red Cross) was complaining about not having enough places for the recent influx of asylum seekers into the city.

The University of Tornio, Kemi and Rovaniemi recently merged to form the giant University of Lapland with its headquarters in Rovaniemi. This is a breakthrough for many petit businesses like the case study Aasian Saasto Market Oy, a small oriental shop located at the core of the city; with easy access to all. These immigrants need something that reminds them of home. It takes time for everyone to get adapted to new environment and even at that, culture is something most people struggle to retain for their future generation. This is where Aasian Saasto comes in with their products and a social media presence to interact with these immigrants. More precisely with a facebook page to remind them of where, how and when to go shopping

1.1 Background knowledge About Aasian Saasto Market

This is a small oriental shop located in the core of the city of Rovaniemi. Currently there exist two of such shops in the city plus another on and off truck driver who pop in from time to time to deliver orders to its most valuable customers at their door. None of these shops have a known forum or media where it get its customers informed and updated about their activities, opening hours, nor their location other than “word of mouth”. So far it seem to be working for them though but with the current state of influx of migrants into the city, Aasian Saasto Market want to take a leap

and stay ahead of its competitors by letting their customers know they care about their opinions thus the idea of social media marketing. The boss happens to be a friend of mine thus after a chat with him, we decided to give this facebook page idea a shot. This was aim to improve his interaction with his customers, keep track of what they love most and ask them of what they might want to have more in the shop

1.2 Research aim:

The aim of this thesis is to find out how this oriental shop could make great use of social media (limited to facebook) to communicate with its customers, promote the business and stay a step ahead of its competitors at no cost. (Organic use of facebook) thus this thesis gives more insight into how the organic use of facebook could improve the marketing communications of the shop and boost its image to its customers. A way to position Aasian Saasto Market at the top of their list when it comes to oriental shopping in Rovaniemi

This meant creating and running the facebook page for the business for a period of 7-8 weeks. Constant observation at the shop on a weekly basis and a final short interview with some few simple questions to ask from some of the customers at the end of the facebook trial period

Research questions:

- 1) How can the marketing communications of this oriental shop (Aasian Saasto Market Oy) be improved upon?
- a) Is the current form of marketing communications satisfying to its customers?
- b) Is there a co-relationship between publicity and customer satisfaction?
- c) What channel of communication is most appealing to its customers?

2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

To get a full understanding of the concept of marketing communications, it is important to look at the definition from different viewpoints. Communication always necessitates two parties involvement as it is an interactive process. Otto Ottosen describe marketing communications as “every kind of communication between a company and client about the company offering” whereas Marcom described marketing communication as all the messages and media u deploy to communicate with your market be it advertising, direct marketing, printed material, PR activities, sales promotion, online presence and more.

Kotler, Kevin and Malcom placed emphasis on marketing communications as essential for modern day practice. According to the integrated marketing communications framework (695-696), they identify 6 steps on how to develop effective communications.

- determine target audience
- set communication objectives
- develop message
- pick channels of communication
- determine frequency of communication
- Operate within budget.

Usually with most marketing communication plan, the budget and resources have to be decided upon before continuing with the communication tools/strategy since it's easier to determine what communication tools to use within a defined budget. But that is not the case with Aasian Saasto Market, since the marketing communications strategy employed here is strictly organic, at a no cost. The audience is clear and easy to define, majority of which include immigrants into the city of Rovaniemi. The last part is exempted from this case, reason being the fact that, it's still a very small business, still struggling to find its root. So it's best to communicate this shop to its audience via purely organic use of facebook, and the excellent use of "Word of Mouth" it will be smart enough to spend more money trying to reduce the supply circle rather than on advertising at this stage. If at some point in the business there is need to expand then there will be a need to set a budget for advertising. This is included in the later part of this thesis as a recommendation for future plans.

After identifying the audience the next step is setting objectives. Here the objectives should be considered as answers to the situational analysis. Thus it has to work as a guideline to what needs to be done to achieve long term goals. A good way to define this objective will be to define it in terms of desired response from the customer's point of view, be it cognitive or affective. The former is more about creating awareness, knowledge and the mental reaction towards the product whereas the latter handles emotional liking and developing interest in the product in question. The communication level can be defined at any level in respect to the hierarchy of effective model.

The next step is about designing the communication. This is about the message strategy which is depended upon three main factors; what to say, how to say and who should say it. And a creative strategy will be based upon informational or transformational appeal. While informational appeal elaborates more on the marketing offerings and payment benefit, transformational appeal depicts more about the personality of the user of a particular brand.

Moving on to the next step which is selecting the communication channels, the goal should be focus on what the audience value most, meaning the company should make efforts to reach out to its audience at the right place, right time and in the right mindset in order to get the best impact of their marketing communication budget. This could be through the use of personal and non personal channels. Personal communication involves face-to-face, person to audience interaction via telephone or email. The effectiveness of this channel of communication is derived from personal presentation and feedback from customers. According to a survey conducted of 7000

customers over seven European countries, 60% said they were influenced by friends and family members to use a new brand; this is how effective word of mouth can impact a business. Some of the personal communication channels to use include the following;

- Word of mouth (WOM); consumers search for information from other consumers to make more informed decisions (Berger 1988), social media (which is the focus of this thesis) is an undeniable important force behind the business-to-business and business-to-consumers marketing nowadays. The extent to which information from others affect individual evaluation of objects depend on whether the individual perceives information about the product/services from others credible or not (Burnkrant and Cousineau, 1975).
- Buzz and viral marketing; it generates excitement and creates publicity for the company at the same time. Viral marketing makes word of mouth spread more easily like a wildfire.
- Blogs; blogging is becoming more popular these days although most people still prefer company website as trustworthy for market offers.

Meanwhile some non-personal channels include;

- Media; it comes in varieties, print media like newspaper, broad media like the radio and TVs, network media via telephones, wireless and display media like billboards. Usually these forms of marketing are the most expensive.
- Sales promotion; most companies use intriguing tools like coupons and premium to attract a greater response from its audience. Beneficial as it communicate and invite the audience to partake in the interaction.
- Guerilla marketing; or attention seeking as most people will prefer is a form of marketing strategy that was initially meant for small businesses although most big brands are the most users of this nowadays. It is form to grasp the attention of the audience in a personal and more memorable way.

The next step is to determine the budget. This seems to be the hardest stage for most companies to determine. Some have chosen to go by the percentage of sales, others by profit optimization. Whichever way the company chooses, what they need to have in mind is to go with the one most affordable and with less payback period to see results.

The next step deals with the marketing communication mix. Whatever the company does, how it does it, their budget has to be allocated amongst the different communication mode;

- Advertising: it's a non verbal mass communication using mass media (such as TV, newspaper magazines, etc), the content of which is determined and paid for by the company.
- Sales promotion: Are sale-stimulating campaigns, such as price cuts, coupons and free samples.
- Public relationship and publicity: the stakeholders are a group of individuals or organizations with whom the company wants to create goodwill. Publicity is impersonal mass communication in mass media, unlike advertising, it is not paid for by the company and the content is written by journalists.
- Events and experiences: like exhibition and trade fairs are of great importance especially with business to business and industrial markets for contacting prospects, users and purchasers.
- Direct and interactive marketing (interacting over the phone, online or in person)

- Word of mouth which has proven to be credible and timely over the years
- Sales force. Personal selling is the most effective when it comes to the buying process. It creates personal interaction immediately, cultivates relationship that leads to response from the buyer.

It is reasonable to measure results after implementing a communication plan to see the impact it has on its audience. This comes in as feedback to the company from the audience, percentage of audiences who saw their ads, messages and react to it. This helps the company redefines its objective and goal and to make certain they are passing the right message.

And the final step is to manage the integrated marketing communication mix. In assessing the impact of the integrated marketing communication program, the company goal is to create the most effective and efficient program possible. (Kotler, Kevin and Malcom, 2009)

2.1 Marketing Communications Plan for ASM OY

Coming up with a communication plan for the shop was pretty much easy as it was experiential with a zero budget to begin with and the use of just one of the above mentioned communication channels (social media). The target audience is well defined so the problem was how to get them fully engage. With the immigrants, they all come from different part of the world with differences in culture and languages so the first thing in mind was to use a common language, an advantage the shop owner has over his competitors since he is good at English, Finnish and Arabic which happens to be the most spoken among his customers.

2.2 Possible Communication Objectives

According to the AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action), this is a model that has been widely used in formulating marketing strategies. The AIDA model recognizes the cognitive stages an individual goes through in the buying of a product/service. However studies on how this model can be applied on social media are still very scarce. This will be use later on in this thesis report to evaluate the outcome of the marketing communication strategy put in place. This can be implemented by letting the people of Rovaniemi know about the location, opening hours, and possible date of arrival of new products as a routine via the facebook page. This way they might be interested to find out what is available in the shop for them. Speaking from a customer point of view, the more informed I am about the products I need especially the ones I might not find easily in the local Finnish supermarket, the more desirable I want to purchase them, I could easily include in my shopping plans to visit the shop. So the guess here is that the other immigrants are thinking same way when it comes to shopping at the oriental shop, therefore the facebook page is to update them with all the necessary information they need so they can act based on it.

Therefore the outcome of this thesis will be an effective facebook page with analysis about its content as a means to communicate ASM Oy with its target market. And below is a table with brief explanation on how the AIDA model could be applied in social media marketing.

steps	strategy
Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advertise on social media sites - become a follower on social media account to make your business visible to your customers - use referrals by existing customers/fans - Use tagging in social media properly.
Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide clear information about product features, price and picture - Provide clear information about company (address, phone number and link to website) - Updates on arrivals of new products on social media channels
Desire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer promotions - Organize contest and gifts - .update social media wall regularly - Provide catchy wall notes with attractive images of product regularly - Monitor comments and feedback from followers and respond as quick as you can
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear ordering process - Clear information on payment options - Provide information on delivery process.

2.3 Designed communication (the message)

Buyers expect one of four types of rewards from the market offering; rational, social sensory and ego. This is a small business, still trying to find its roots. The owner doesn't want to grow too big. One of the reasons is to maintain closeness with the customers. Another reason is due to the tax system. The business is on a progressive tax rate, the bigger the business the more tax it will pay, and like most small busi-

nesses under progressive tax system, they all try to avoid that part, same reason why most Finnish firms chose to remain small. The message of this shop is simply to inform the customers of a constant availability of the products, when the customers want it and at an affordable price. The bonus point is, the owner is good at English, Finnish and Arabic. Three quarter of the customers speaks Arabic and the remaining quarter could manage in English and Finnish. This means with a facebook page, it will be easier for the shop owner to connect with his audience in their language of preference. Facebook Posts will be written in all these three languages, as well as responding to customer's messages. But the question is, will there be enough time to do this after he takes over as admin of the page? Given the fact that there exist only one salesperson thus plenty to do around the shop and less time to connect on social media, reason why the owner has been reluctant to involve the business with social media in the first place.

2.4 Select the Channel

With the ASM OY the author went for the free and easy to reach channel to communicate with the audience. To begin with, there was need to design a business card for the shop which included the necessary information like address, telephone number and facebook name. With the business card, it was easier to distribute them to the locals around the city with less explanation to do.

2.4.1 Word of mouth (WOM)

It has proven to be effective for businesses for all time. All that needed to be done was tell a few friends to inform their friends about this page for the shop through other social network like "viber" and "what's app". During the process of distributing the business card to the targeted audience, there was the mention of the lottery game and the price involved a means to attract their attention even more.

2.4.2 Buzz and viral

This was the use of the facebook page itself to spread the news. Asking friends, mostly the ones in Finland to like, share and invite their friends. Been a foreigner with very few friends, looking to attract more fans to a page, (mostly the ones in Finland in other to be able to see and measure results) there was need for constant reminder and calls via other social networks.

2.5 Marketing Communication Mix for ASM Oy

As mentioned above the aim of the research was to position ASM Oy at a higher level in the mind of its customers over its competitors when it comes to groceries shopping of its category. How? By keeping them informed, updated and connected to each other with common interest in groceries (foreign products). With this line of business, competing on grounds of quality as one's product benefit is not good enough. The goods are all imported from within Europe, thus must have undergone a standard quality checks. In this case what the customers need more from this type of business is the constant supply and availability of their demand at an affordable price as well. So there is the great need to shorten the supply chain to keep the customers satisfied. Reason why facebook which is common and most used social networks amongst the customers will be a great tool to keep them informed and updated.

3 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN PRACTICE WITH ASM

In this section of the thesis, there is more information about what channel of communications will best suit the oriental shop best over the other channels. Again this channel was chosen base on the fact that there was no budget allocated into communicating its message to the stakeholders involved thus, the cheapest, most used and also what was most common amongst the customers was taken into account in selecting the communication channels in this thesis.

3.1 Social Media

Of the many definitions about social media, one of my favourites is that of Lizer Buyer, "it is today most transparent, engaging and interactive form of public relation. It combine the real grit of real time content, with the view of peer-to-peer

communication” not only has social media change the way most organizations do business in recent years but it has succeeded in creating a niche into the business world, as we hear more of positions like community manager and social media analyst in job openings with most organizations nowadays.

Given the fact how customers (potentials) are constantly searching for goods/services, the worst action in any business environment will be to do nothing and be invisible to those looking for goods and services that they could provide them. Even been a bit off center and seen in a negative light (bad review) is better than been invisible. If you’re not seen by any body, there is no chance to grow, not a chance to prosper and neither a chance to attract new customers and if new customers are not coming in, there is no chance of survival. So how does an entrepreneur make himself visible? The easiest way is deciding to take part in conversations and constantly changing the way to communicate, engage, acquire and retain new customers. (Canning Brain, 134, 2015)

3.1.1 Facebook

The most visited online network in Finland is Facebook, founded in 2004 with over 600 million users and presence in over 70 countries (Carlson; 2011, TechTree News Staff; 2008). With the case in Finland Facebook came on top of the list with 82% of respondents by a statistic of social media sites visited by internet users in Finland in 2014. The good thing about Facebook is the fact that it offers its users the possibility to use it be it for personal reason, business purposes or a combination of these two. The image below shows this statistic in figure.

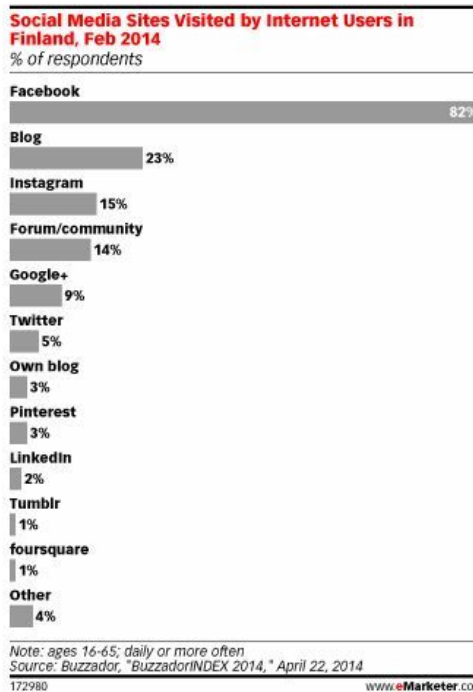


Image 1: social media site visited by internet users in Finland

As seen from the image above over 80% of the internet users in Finland made use of Facebook with over 2 million daily usage. Given the small population size of Finland, this is proof Facebook usage exceeds by far the other social networks. Enough reason why ASM Oy stands a better chance of thriving with a Facebook presence in Finland. Unlike the old media, it is possible to get intimate with customers and competitive intelligence from participating in relevant Facebook groups and ongoing conversation in friends' profiles. Marketers could use this insight to get solutions to their market place. (Steven Holzner, 75, 2009).

After getting its root into social media via Facebook, it will be a great idea to expand their social network usage by making their presence known on Instagram as well. As the image shows Instagram happens to be the next big thing to Facebook in Finland, with a growing presence of 15%. Moreover it is possible and easier to blend both usage. With smartphones, there is a possibility to share same pictures and updates on both Facebook and Instagram with just a click.

3.1.2 Viral Marketing with Facebook

The concept of pages was introduced in 2007 to let business and artist interact with their facebook members without all onerous demand of maintaining thousands of friends. More importantly,facebook add some applications to certain types of pages that have some built in application already, making it easier to manage the page.

Usually the page logo appears in the fan's profile, this is a great way to attract more people to a business page. When their friends browse their profile and realize they are fans to a particular page,they too might easily join in and that's how words spread from person to person on facebook, thus the concept of viral markeitn put in use effectively. There are possibly two ways for people to view or encounter a page on facebook. One way is by looking at their friend's profile and seeing what pages they're fan to and joining in as well. And the more fans share your page,the more viral it will go, which is very easy to do with just a click on "share" with friends. A tool for small businesses, free and easy to maintain. (Steven Holzner,72-85, 2009)

3.1.3 Facebook Analytic Tool

It is possible to get an insight into how progressive your business is doing thanks to the help of facebook own tool the Insights accessible to any fan/company page with a minimum "likes" of 30. with this, it is possible to see how many likes, how many people your post reach out to, how many people are talking/sharing your posts and the number engage to it as well. Most of the time businesses focus on the "likes". As much as it is good to get the likes, if the people are not fully engaged then the likes doesn't serve the purpose its supposed to. Although facebook is free, to get better and more effective results the company will have to pay inother to promote your page and boosting your post to reach more than targeted audience.meaning it is possible to boost a post about a content of a company's product or information posted on it's wall for a price range depending on the size of the company and target audience, in my case a fee of 4e per/day was demanded. Below is the a picture of the state of Aasian Saasto after two weeks of existence.

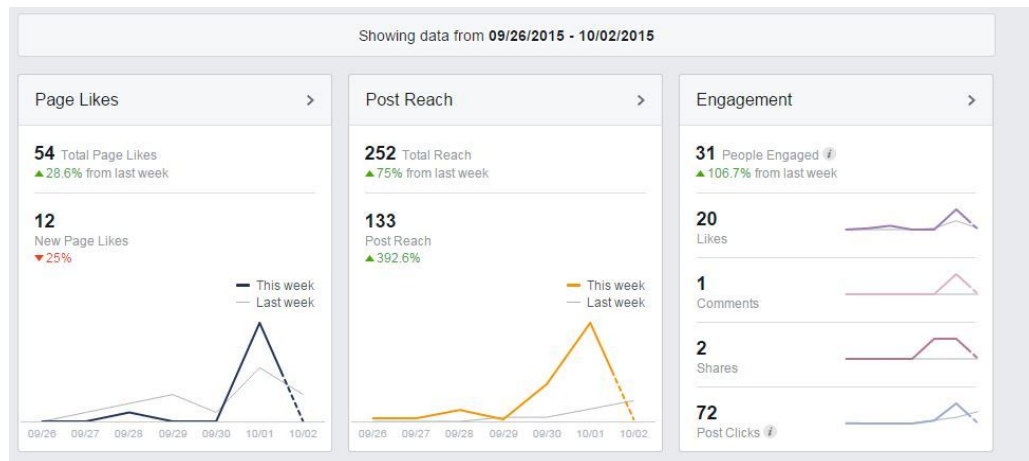


Image 2: Aasian Saasto market after 2 weeks of existence

3.2 Advertising with Posts

Facebook introduced social ads in November 2007 to replace flyers. There exist two main types of ads on facebook; the standard and social ads. For the purpose of this thesis, just the social ads will be discussed here. Facebook social ads allow businesses to be a part of people's conversation, visible to them as they browse facebook to connect with their friends. Social ads are placed on highly visible part on the site making it hard to avoid and at the same time convenient for the user without interrupting their activities. It is possible from the marketing point of view to add items to your friend's news feed promoting your business for free, thus allowing facebook members to post ads on their friend's news feed is a great marketing tool especially for small start-up businesses reluctant or unable to invest in paid ads at the early stages of their businesses. (Steven Holzner, 131-140, 2009)

3.2.1 The Lottery Game Post Ads

To attract more people to the page at no cost, (organic usage of facebook), the shop owner decide on sacrificing €50 for a game winner. This was to attract more viewers to the page during the trial period. So during the second week of the existence of the page, the lottery game was introduced to the page fans on the wall, asking the fans/followers to share and invite their friends. The number of reach out to this post

was fantastic, given the fact that the page was in existence for just two weeks. Below is an overall view of the page ads as a mean to attract more people to the page, the last day before the winner was announced.

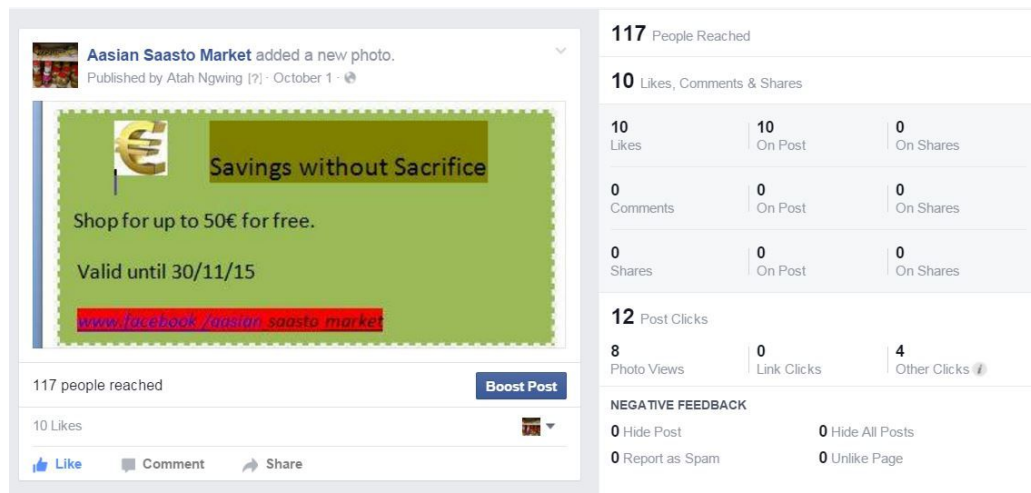


Image2: posted ads

4 RESEARCH GOAL AND METHODOLOGY

This section of the thesis is formed with intention to give a better understanding of the methodology of the study, in both theory and practice.

4.1 Objectives

The research method used was mainly qualitative, which involved face-to-face interview with some of the customers at the shop and the owner as well. Due to time limitation, the researcher deem it wise and enough to use this method. One reason for the face-to-face interview was to find out from the customers themselves, their viewpoint about the facebook page, if it was informative enough, boring or to know what needed to be added to the updates. Their feedback was important since this is a whole new idea of communicating with customers for the boss.

The number of reach out the facebook page got within the short period of existence was incredible. But again this is how the traffic on social media works, easier to view what your friends are viewing. But the good thing about facebook insight is that its easier to view the number of reach out to your page, including the location and gender. To measure the result, the invitation to the page was sent mostly to viewers in Finland since this is the target audience. The most reach out was coming from Finland which proof the targeted audience was actually aware of the existence of such a shop in Lapland, free publicity.

With the influx of immigrants into the city, it is obvious that the city is going to experience more of such business popping in, since there is enough customers and market for everyone. So the question is, will ASM oy remain at the same level or expand when the competition becomes fierce. Will there be reason to try out the paid ads on facebook or just stick to the organic usage. Which ever version or social network it chosses, the important thing will be the content management. There is a need for interesting posts to engage with the customers. Regular updates about new arrivals and some special offers.

From feedback from the customers during this trial period, the owner has enough reason to keep this page active after this trial period since he was involve in the interviewing as a translator.

4.2 Research Approach

Like mentioned above, the research approach was mainly qualitative. This was to enhance the reliability and validity of the thesis in general. This is a common research approach, as usually it is use to back up one set of findings from one method of data collection.

Throughout the entire thesis writing process, the author collected secondary information from various sources, most of which included e-articles and ebooks from web sources, constant observation at the shop in question, interviews with some customers at the shop and shop owner as well. With this information and that from the facebook insight analysis, the author was able to come up with a couple of questions to ask the customers along the way of the thesis writing. The interview was

held at the shop during the customer shopping period, this was to give them a more comfortable feeling rather than elsewhere like the street or shopping centre for instance, where they could feel embarrassed especially if English is not their first language. Another reason was because at the shop the shop owner acted as a translator and approval since some of these people needed to hear from him and make sure the interview was not intended for other purposes. The interview with the shop owner was held at a restaurant, most of which was meant for future plans, reason why his part of the interview is excluded from this thesis report.

The questions asked are included in this report, mostly related to marketing communications. About their viewpoint of the page and what needed to be included to get them more engage with the page.

4.2.1 Reliability of the Research

Reliability is describe as the consistency and validity of test result determined through statistical methods after repeated trials. There is a threat of bias in this thesis. The interviewee could have responded in a way to please the interviewer especially since there was an ongoing lottery on the facebook page at the time of the interview. And the shop owner who was also present during the interview. To reduce this risk, the interviewee were made to understand their honest responses will help shape the shop to improve on serving them more and to make their shopping experience at the shop more comfortable in the future. There is also the possibility that the interviewer may have brought too much of her presence during the interviewing session refered to as Observer's bias in research thus affecting the respondent opinion. This is a common phenominon with face-to-face interviews. If that be the case, note be taken that it wasn't the author's intention to do so. (definition from business dictionary)

4.2.2 Validity of the Research

Due to lack of time, the researcher did not do a follow up interview about this facebook page in order to reach high reliability level. Moreover the time frame was rather short for a research of such. To have a more understanding on how facebook

insight content management could impact a business, 8 weeks observation was not enough to draw conclusions based on the outcome.

Considering the aforementioned factors that could decrease the validity of the research, it should be noted that the researcher was fully aware of such issues thus the research was conducted with the fullest reliability and validity possible at the time of the research.

4.3 Data collection

To evaluate this research there was a total of 30 customers who agreed to be interviewed. This was done during their shopping time at the shop. This way it was easier to note the faces interviewed from the ones yet to be and also for the comfort of the customer/interviewee. There was the need of a translator since as mentioned earlier on, more than half of the customers at the shop speak Arabic, a language completely new to the researcher, thus the questions were translated before hand by the boss and some of their answers, from their facial expression it was easy to tell what they meant, but the boss did enjoy time translating as well. Another source of data was of course from the facebook analytic tool Insight. It was possible to see all activities, including the gender ratio of visitors at the page. Another source of data collection was from e-article, eBooks and journals from web source and finally to conclude, comparison was made with sales from the month of July, August, with that of September and October to see if there was any impact. The sales revenue results will be hard to tell during this short time period. Since another big reason there could be a change in the sales could be as a result of change of location of the shop. Since word of mouth was the communication tool use in this case, this could have impacted the sales. And change of location meant some renovation work to be done. It takes time to get settle in, so maybe customers from the old location could have given the new site some time to settle in before they could stop by to check out their new products, but that been said, the face-to-face interview was a good start, since it was possible to tell if the interviewee was a new or old migrant into the city of Rovaniemi which was important to find out if they knew about the page and how they got direction to the shop.

4.4 Limitation and Challenges

The two greatest challenges were that of time and language. It was too quick to tell if the changes or difference in the sales revenue was seen due to the marketing communications strategy implemented during this short period of time. Research of such, been the very first for the business needed some months to see impacts thus an 8weeks period was too quick to jump into conclusion about it impacts/effects on sales.

Another limitation was the language of instruction on the facebook page. During the author's time as admin of the page, the language used in the posts was mostly English and a little Finnish. With $\frac{3}{4}$ of the customers been Arabs, most of them were complaining of not been able to follow up with the page as a result of the language of instruction. Lucky enough the shop owner won't face such problems when he takes over as the page admin since he's trilingual.

Communication is what makes us human, cultural differences are amongst the most important factors that impact international marketing communications. Since marketing communications tries to persuade customers (potential) by conveying a message to them, how you say it, what you say and who should say it is a very important factor to take into account when interacting with diverse customers. The translation from the message strategy (what to say) into a creative strategy (how to say) is more problematic in international marketing communications. This was true with the case of this facebook page related to direct communication. For the purpose of this thesis, approaching the customers (especially the male Arabs) the author had to make sure it was appropriate for a lady to address a man directly in public since this is not acceptable in some cultures and also to try to not sound offensive and be misinterpreted during the interview session. (Patrick de Pelsmacker, Maggie Geuens, Joeri van den Bergh, 5, 9, 2010)

4.5 Recommendations

In this section the author suggest ways to improve upon the business advertising and communication strategies to better serve the current customers and a need to reach out to a larger audience in the later future.

One way was to schedule an interview with the local newspaper (Uusi Rovaniemi English forum). The English forum in the newspaper is a whole page where in foreigners are interviewed in both English and Finnish about their experiences, difficulties in adapting and many more in Finland and Lapland in particular. This will be a great publicity for the shop especially with the potential Finnish customers. The author was able to schedule an interview with the owner of the shop which will be printed in the January version. A great timing as well since December and January are usually the busiest for the city.

As mentioned earlier on about the three cities of Kemi, Rovaniemi and Tornio merging to form the University of Lapland with its headquarter in Rovaniemi. This meant more foreign students than before thus another way is to negotiate with the university, the shop could get its ads included into the school journals or magazine, but this comes with a little price, as it means the students will get a discount price every time they shop at the oriental shop.

5 IMPLEMENTATION OF FACEBOOK (ORGANIC)

5.1 The goal

Like all businesses on social media the ultimate goal is to increase their visibility and awareness. that is not different for ASM oy. The goal of this facebook page was to reach out to 200 viewers, 100 likes and 5 comments per post within this short period

of time since the entire facebook idea was going in for the organic version. With the help of the facebook insight tool, it was possible to measure the outcome of this.

5.2 The strategy

After viewing similar facebook pages and their contents, the author came up with the basic rules. A minimum of 2 posts a week, with pictures and also a reminder post to the fans about new arrivals (usually not fix but at least twice a month). the timing was very important. Again the facebook insight tool facilitated the measurement of this outcome, what content had the most reach out to, what time of the day it was posted and the number of “shares” and “likes” it received.

5.3 Posts

For the purpose of this thesis, the author decided to post both simply texts and also picture texts as well. The aim here was to find out which post style will attract the fans more to comment on. Also there is the issue of how many posts per week and how often there was the need to reply to comment. Since this is the beginning phase of a whole new experience for the shop, it was important to get the customers excited about the content of the post and at the same time not get them easily bored with too much of it, so the author decided to go for two posts a week excluding reminder posts. Posts about reminders were simply text only.

The timing of the posts matters a whole deal. For the purpose of this thesis posting was done during early mornings, afternoons and the evenings, just to see the difference it would have. And just like Dan Zarrella mentioned in his article, likes peak around 8: pm while shares earlier on 6: pm (how to get more liker, comment and share on facebook,), this evidence was true. As the author realized the highest shares and likes were obtain in the evenings and especially on weekends. Also it was realized sales at the shop was at its apex during the 3rd-4th and 16th-17th monthly thus posting on the 2nd and 15th was very valuable. This was like a reminder to the customers about their shopping for the following day. It was also very important to

make sure new products are introduced to the customers during these days. Discounted products are also introduced during this time period as well.

Below are images from the insight analysis of the highest likes the page got during the trial period from September 15th to November 10th. Below are some images of posts with highest reach out and engagement.

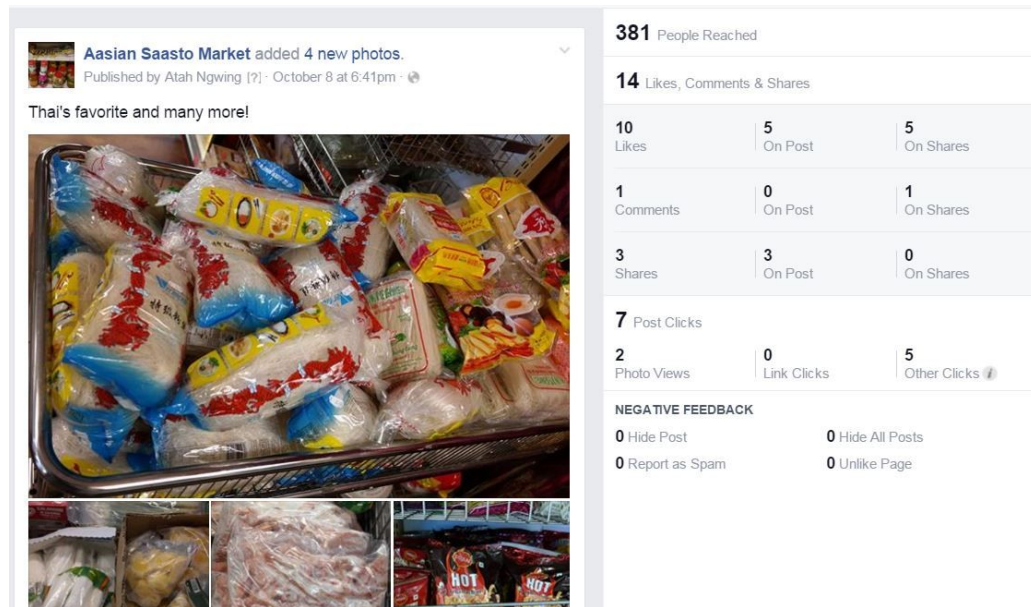


Image3: ASM oy informative post about products

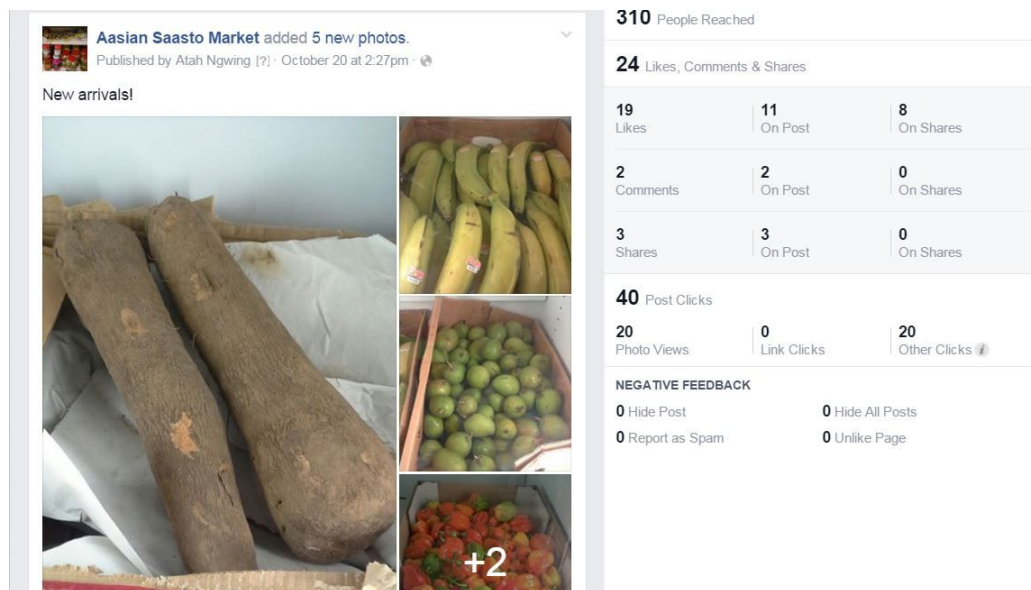


Image 4: ASM oy informative post about new arrivals

5.4 Likes/Reach

It was amazing to find out the number of people this page could reach out to especially since it's based on the organic usage of facebook. within the first 2 weeks the page had reached out to more than a 100 persons and the number of likes were more than the minimum number (30 demanded of facebook to get access into your page insight). This was great because from the analytic tool most of these persons were in Finland with a 50.36% reach out, with approximately 20% from the city of Rovaniemi, our target market. the figure below explains this statistics better.

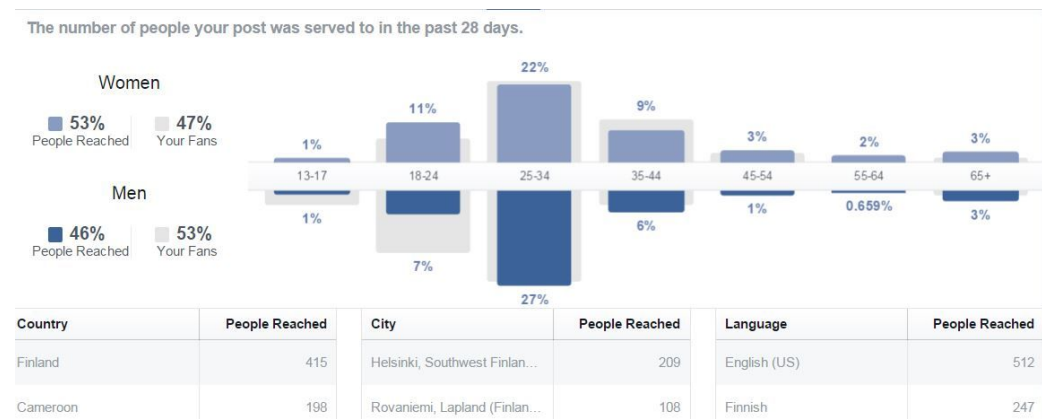


Image 5: ASM oy page gender reach out

6 OUTCOME

This section of the report will explain the outcome of the marketing communications' channel put in place with the aid of the AIDA model. And response to the research questions in section 1.2 of this report is also included in this section as well.

The use of the AIDA model is best to explain the outcome of this thesis as stated earlier on. This is a model that has been widely used in formulating marketing strategies. The AIDA model identifies cognitive stages an individual goes through in the buying process of a product/service. However studies on how this AIDA model can

be applied on social media are still scarce. Evaluation of the marketing communications strategy put in place based on the model;

- Attention: to improve the marketing communications of ASM Oy, a facebook page was created to get the attention. Word of mouth and business cards were used as referrals to spread the news.
- Interest: the facebook page useful information about the shop, like location, opening hours and telephone number. With its profile picture of products and layout of the shop.
- Desire: there was a constant update (twice a week) about new arrivals and a quick response to questions posted by the customers. (70% response rate with 7 minutes response time) full engagement of fans/followers of the page about the first lottery game contest.
- Action: information about card type acceptable was also included as a reminder to fans/followers. Free candies offer to kids during shopping as well.

6.1 Facebook Insight analyses

This section highlight the use of facebook own insight tool about the activity of the page. The total numbers of likes, posts reach out, engagement including the gender and location the page was view from different part of the world.

6.1.1 Likes/Reach

Like made mention above, the total likes the page got is based from the facebook insight tool during the entire trial period from September the 16th until the end of the project, November 10th. the likes here refer to the total page likes and the average number of likes per post during this time period. Again it should be noted that the page made no use of paid ads neither to increase page fans nor to boost the reach out of post during this entire period. The initial goal at the beginning of this project was to reach out to 200 viewers with a 100 “Likes” for the page, but at the end of the trial period, the page had a total of 82 “Likes” and had reached out to more than 350

people based on the insight analysis. this amount included the number of people that were served by the activities of the page including posts to the page, page-like ads, mention and check-ins. within the first 2 weeks of existence, the page had 54 “likes” and had reached out to 250 people, more than half of the total page likes and views during the entire trial period. During week 4 and 5, the Likes were stagnant, then a rise in this number during week 7 and 8. an overall average of 6 likes during the first 5 weeks and an average of 3 likes during the last 3 weeks of the trial period. Below is a look at this figure from the last day of the trial period.

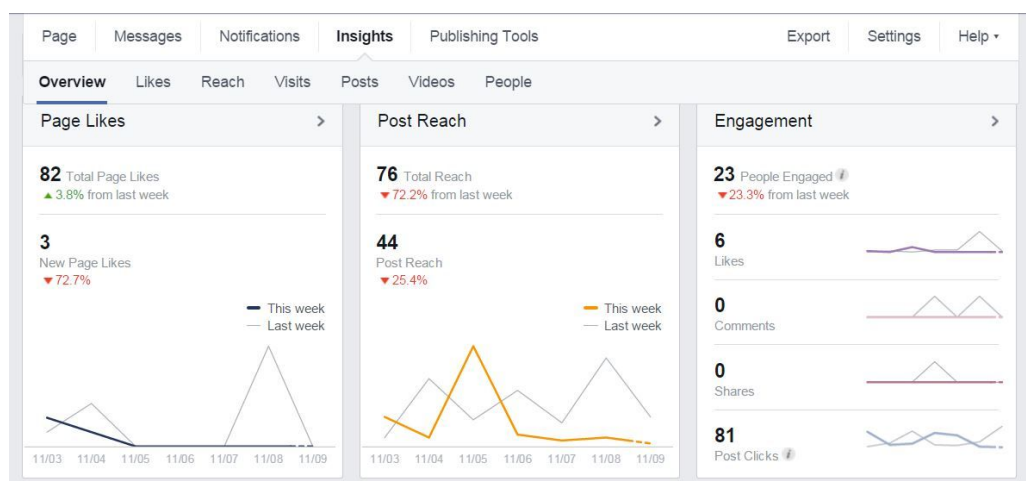


Image 6: total page likes/reach out of ASM oy

As seen from the image there is a lot of red indicating a drop down in the percent figure. This was done intentionally during the last week of the trial period to see the impact it will have on the page. No posting was done during the last week.

6.1.2 Engagement

Getting the fans fully engaged solely depended on the content of the page. Creating engaging content idea is still a challenge for most businesses on social media. What is certain about facebook is the fact that the most engaging posts are always associated with photos. With the case of ASM OY trending topics like new arrivals and images link to specific ethnic culture had the greatest engagement. With fans asking questions, tagging their friends and sharing on their walls.

6.2 Questions for the interview

During the last week of the scheduled plan finding, a short interview with the customers or questions was held at the shop and from their response the author will use to grant the success of the overall thesis idea. Questions asked!

- Are you on Instagram/facebook?
- Which one do you use more often?
- Are you aware of our page on facebook?
- How did you hear about us?
- Did you find the information on our page helpful in any way?
- How can we improve our content to get you more engaged?

6.2.1 Feedback

From the interview with the customers, a majority of them were more active with facebook than other social networks. A few had their facebook account interconnected to their Instagram account, but hardly ever share posts from their facebook account to Instagram or vice versa. This goes to answer the question about what channel of communication was most appealing to the customers. Most of them preferred facebook since it was easy and the most common social media to connect with their families and friends, moreover with most smart phones it is an in-purchase app, thus most smart phones have facebook install in it. And most of them who knew about the presence of the shop on facebook were been told by friends who either share the page on their private facebook wall or invited them to join the page on their news feed. Some of them were intrigue by the flyer's ads which was distributed around the city during the first week of the existence of the page about the lottery game to join the page with hope of winning. One customer told me she didn't see any need to continue following the page as a fan after the lottery game since she was not the winner. Asked about what kind of content they will like to read more from the shop facebook wall, some of them wanted to hear more about sales and discount offer, while others were more interested about posts of products with pictures and a little explanation of their origin. A few of the customers were interested in seeing posts about special "dishes" on special occasion around the world. What was common amongst their re-

sponse was the fact that they all thought the basic information about opening hours and arrival of new products was very useful to them.

Their feedback has a lot to say about content management. This was useful to the boss. He was amazed to hear what these people had to say about the facebook page and the kind of content that could get them fully engaged. To comment about the research question in section 1.2 above, about how to improve upon the marketing communications of ASM Oy, constant communication with the customers is needed to make your business presence known to the potential customers. That been said, introducing ASM to social media is just one means of them to convey their message to their customers. Making a positive impact with their product quality and availability of these products is of great importance to the customers. With time it will be good to invest on advertising and publicity, this way they could be certain they're getting the attention they need to stay visible to the potential customers.

6.3 Sales Analysis

Sales here refer to the monthly turnover. It is included in this report to answer the questions asked earlier on in this report in 1.4. Again the time period was too short to determine if the difference in sales was as a result of the marketing communications strategy put in place or other factors. For the sake of confidentiality, the difference is stated in percentage. The monthly turnover from July until November was compare to see if there were any changes. Indeed the difference was seen in 41.2%, 42.5% as against 56% for the month of October. As noted there was a sharp increase from September and October. This could have been as a result of the recent influx of immigrants into the city during the entire trial period from September. What was hard to determine was if the increase in sales was due to the publicity the shop got during this period on social media. Where they spending more during this period because they were more informed about products arrival, opening hours and more information about the page activities?

Based on the responses from the interview with some of these customers, since most if not all knew about the facebook page, most of whom were invited by their friends to the page. And the fact that some of them were complaining about the language of

the page been English making it hard for them to understand, meant they saw the posts and updates from the pictures posted on the facebook page. Again this could be one reason only to explain this increase in sales. Publicity with facebook posts didn't produce immediate response with shopping at the shop but a reminder of availability of these products at all time.

7 CONCLUSIONS

With the high influx of immigrants into the city of Rovaniemi, most of these people don't have a place they could wake up every day and go to, be it a job or school. Most are idle at home doing nothing. Their minds are bored, they need something to distract them, some will turn to facebook while most spend hours surfing the internet. Aasian Saasto Market Oy could take advantage of this opportunity and give these people what they need.

If the facebook page is updated with interesting content, this will attract their attention more. Not only should the page be active but the content is of importance. With the other facebook pages of shops of similar category, they sometimes offer discounts and sales for a short period of time (usually within a day) without pre-informing the fans about it. They just announced these offer on their wall and only active followers could get this information and benefit from the offer. This is something Aasian Saasto market could practice.

The facebook page idea was to get ASM Oy started with social media marketing, but there is a whole lot to do to stay connected to the audience on these networks. I think I did a great job introducing them into social media; hopefully they will stay there and even extend their presence to other social networks like Instagram with time.

7.1 Lessons learned

I would grade this project a pass since the objectives and goals for which it was created for has been fulfilled. The customers are well informed about the basics of the shop like their address, opening hours, arrival of new products. This has improved their level of satisfaction. It was a great experience for me to find out how facebook content management could take a business to a whole new level.

One thing I wish I did was to make use of the paid ads on facebook and compare the impact with the organic use. But that notwithstanding the overall experience was a great one. Been a regular customer at the oriental shop their facebook presence just made my shopping life much easier.

7.2 Future Plans

Aasian Saasto market has branches in Kemi and Oulu. So in the future what they're planning on doing is to see into it that all three branches are connected on social media especially facebook. To achieve this, the boss needs to think about paying for facebook ads in other to reach out to a bigger audience. The use of organic facebook is essential for small business, but when a business has its branches in other cities, there is need to organize its content in other to serve its customers better.

The use of facebook without the paid ads won't serve this business well. Besides, as a means to limit the use of free publicity, facebook introduced the strategy of limiting the total number of organic reach out as of January 2015. This is a way to encourage businesses to make use of their paid ads. Thus they try to limit the number of reach out to organic posts they find too promotional.

This means the shop will have to do a re-think about their marketing strategy and try to allocate some budget to their advertising if they're planning on merging all three branches on social media at the same time under same account and name.

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