

# Social Media Marketing as a part of effective online strategy in small businesses

Case company: Amani Dress

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ABSTRACT

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In the world of today, where we have a tendency towards globalization, the role of social media is growing rapidly and it is expanding and increasing the diversity of communication channels in the global network. More and more people are spending a meaningful part of their daily life by surfing the Internet. Consequently, it reflects business in general and has a crucial impact on small organizations in particular. Based on this, it is important for all businesses to understand the role of Social Media Marketing for implementing new and most up-to-date strategies for their businesses.

Usually, small companies do not have a strategy when they start to use social media. The aim of this thesis is to help the business's owner to understand the important role of a professional and consistent strategy in the Social Media Marketing process of the company in order to achieve higher sales and build relationships with customers, which should be based mainly on loyalty and a long-term perspective. Moreover, the idea is to help the case company Amani Dress to reach Finnish customers through efficient usage of Social Media Marketing. The final goal is to provide the development plan for Amani Dress.

The author uses deductive approach as well as qualitative and quantitative methodology. The secondary data is collected from different reliable sources of literature concerning Social Media Marketing. While, the author also depicts primary data, where the survey and two interviews are presented.

Based on the analysis, the author suggests that the case company should focus on developing certain social media channels, as well as be oriented to a Finnish market and create all content in Finnish language with news updated daily. The company should establish a dialogue with their Finnish customers and be ready to adapt to the ever-changing desires of the clients. As a conclusion, the case company is recommended to move forward with the Development Plan and suggestions in order to implement Social Media Marketing in Finland and attract Finnish customers.

Key words: social media, Social Media Marketing, small business

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Saint-Petersburg, Russia, April 2016

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter provides a brief overview of the study presented in the thesis. This chapter introduces the reader to the reason for the research and specifies the objectives of the study. The overview prepares the reader for the review of key theoretical terms.

### 1.1 Study Background

It is true that the Internet has changed our lives entirely since it was invented in 1969. During all these years it influenced in all spheres of our lives and business was not an exception. Also during the Internet's existence, it has changed and now it is not only a source for calculating financial figures but more an interactive platform, where everyone can communicate globally through various channels; for businesses there is a possibility and a great aim to advertise specific products and services according to the customers' preferences. Nowadays, it is a fact, that online marketing has increasingly become a fertilized area for almost all businesses over the world. Sean Carton (2009), heads the Center for Digital Communication, Culture, and Commerce at the University of Baltimore, identified social media notion as Internet-based technologies that facilitate conversation.

In today's world, the social media plays a huge role in business. As it is consumed on the daily basis there are many examples, which can support the key role of the Social networking for international companies. Moreover, the competent and rational use of social media in marketing leads to loyal and economically successful relationships with customers. Unfortunately, the majority of small business owners do not pay enough attention to the social media opportunities and start using different social platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook with a lack of knowledge and without a well-thought-out strategy. As a result, a priceless opportunity implementation is missed. (Mangold & Faulds 2009.)

The idea of this report is to understand the role of Social Media Marketing for small businesses from the viewpoint of the case company Amani Dress, which produces evening dresses for women from 16 and above.

Social networks allow us easily to communicate with people and recognize brands. We interact with them faster than ever before. Now there is a lot of research showing that social networking has an impact on purchasing decisions, which in turn is reflected in retail, advertising and business in general. (Tuten 2008.)

Most small business owners realize the importance of social media but do not make efforts to achieve real results - development of new areas, the organization of customer feedback, and most importantly, to stimulate sales and improve profitability. Based on this, it is very important to do a research where the author will analyze how to achieve success in social media and attract the greatest number of customers. The case company Amani Dress is doing the initial step of attracting Finnish customers using Social Media Marketing, and the aim of this work is to provide recommendations for the company on how to use social media more effectively as a part of their marketing plan. Furthermore, the author has chosen this topic, because it is rather a current theme and very little research on this subject has been made. Thus, the author assumes that this work will contribute to the study of this issue and will be a valuable source for future resources.

Nowadays, it is a fact that social media has a huge impact on business sphere. Thousands of people using social platforms not only to communicate with each other but to find new information as well. From this point of view, business owners should understand that social media opens up enormous new benefits and opportunities for their companies. Accordingly, social media attracts the author's interest and in this thesis the main aim will be to write how to use social media effectively and offer a clear social media strategy to the case company Amani Dress.

## 1.2 Thesis Objectives, Research Questions, and Limitations

The main theme of this thesis is Social Media Marketing. The crucial objective of the report is to provide insights on how a small business can use social media as a marketing tool in consumer marketing, especially from the viewpoint of the case company Amani Dress in the Finnish market. As a result, this thesis will provide a clear development plan in order to offer suggestions to Amani Dress company how to use social media efficiently to reach Finnish customers.

According to 2015 Social Media Marketing Industry Report, 92% of businesses' owners are interested in knowing which social media tactics work the best and that are the ways to engage the audience in social media (Stelzner 2015). By analyzing these questions the author summed up and composed the main question of the thesis:

- How can the case company Amani Dress improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract customers in Finland?

In order to answer the main research question, this research will answer the sub-questions below:

- What is social media?
- What is Social Media Marketing?
- What opportunities and challenges do small businesses meet when using Social Media Marketing?
- How does Social Media Marketing influence the Finnish target customer group?

The main purpose of the study is to obtain knowledge and describe how small business companies should use social media in their marketing communications. Furthermore, it is important to answer how the case company Amani Dress should improve its Social Media Marketing to reach new Finnish customers. The idea is to describe and explain issues regarding how companies can efficiently use social media with the help of

integration, targeting the right people, use of strategies and tactics and by considering the future of Social Media Marketing. As a result, the thesis will present recommendations for Amani Dress of using Social Media Marketing and strategic plan for improving its social media strategy.

One important thing in writing thesis work is to define the limitations of the research. This thesis has two limitations and the first one is that the scope of research is Finland and it does not provide information about other locations. The second limitation is that the segment of the case company Amani Dress are women from 16 and above, that means that the results of the study will not be suitable for the different target groups and different products.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework

The main aim of the thesis is to help the case company Amani Dress to use social media as effectively as possible and, as a result, to attract new customers in Finland. In order to achieve this goal, the main concepts of social media will be defined, such as social media zones and social networking sites. Furthermore, Social Media Marketing will be discussed, where such models as 4P's and 4C's will also be included. Also, will be defined which opportunities and challenges small business meets when using Social Media Marketing.

A topic about objectives, strategies, and tactics for Social Media Marketing process will also be included in the theoretical part, in order to thoroughly understand which actions have to be done to create an effective social media strategy.

One of the most difficult questions for companies is: How to recognize that Social Media Marketing is working for them? From this point of view, it is important to define how to measure Social Media Marketing and the author will expound the answer.

At the end of this research, the Social Media Marketing development plan, based on the theory and empirical findings, will be presented for the case company.

#### 1.4 Research Methodology and Data Collection

First of all, it is important to choose which research approach is better to use for the particular thesis. There are two different approaches:

1. Inductive
2. Deductive

Inductive approach is when the researcher would collect data and develop a theory as a result of the data analysis (Saunders 2009). The inductive approach is based on a variety of individual cases and argues that a link which has been observed in all of these cases also is generally valid (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2008). Deductive approach is when the researcher develops a theory and hypothesis (or hypotheses) and designs a research strategy to test the hypothesis (Saunders 2009). The deductive approach is based on a general rule, arguing that this explains a particular case of interest. This approach is often less risky (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2008). In this thesis will be used the deductive approach.

Next steps are to choose which methodology to use and how to collect the data. In this thesis, the author will use both qualitative and quantitative methodology. According to Kumar (2008), the main idea of quantitative research is to obtain knowledge by processing a big quantity of data to get the objective answer to a research question. Whereas, qualitative research receives in-depth information with an emphasis on quality rather than quantity.

Quantitative data usually consists of numbers, while qualitative data consists of words and pictures. A quantitative study is the best alternative when the author knows a lot about the problem that will be examined.

However, qualitative research is better when the author wants to get a holistic view and understanding of the context. (Kumar 2008.)

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the thesis is to improve Social Media Marketing strategy of the case company Amani Dress in order to attract new customers in Finland. From this perspective, the study will need to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to get comprehensive answers to the research questions. Creswell and Clark (2011), indicate several ways of quantitative research: surveys, phone interviews, and written questionnaires. The author decided to conduct the survey among the company's target group and as a result, the information from 126 Finnish women was gathered. Also, the phone interview with the Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland was conducted.

However, Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011) listed the following basic types of qualitative research: focus-group discussions, in-depth interviews, and observations. In order to find out the main information about the case company and their goals, the in-depth interview with CEO of Amani Dress was done.

The next point is to start gathering the data. According to Ghauri & Gronhaug (2010), secondary data are facts and figures, which were collected before the current research by someone other than the researcher herself. This kind of data might be useful, particularly when the research topics are not familiar to the author. There are several approaches how to divide secondary data sources. Some argue that sources should be divided into internal and external. Others divide the sources into Internet sources such as websites, and Traditional print sources such as different books and articles. However, some authors, for example, Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) offer another way of classification: documentary, survey-based and a combination of both - multiple sources. In the thesis the author will use both primary and secondary data sources.

In this thesis, secondary data is collected from different articles, books and materials about Social Media Marketing. Furthermore, the author gathered information from websites, specializing in statistic. Also, secondary data sources are collected from marketing reports and journals. Summarizing, secondary data sources are extremely important for the thesis.

Primary data is based on empirical proof the author has collected independently, for the current research. According to Ghauri & Gronhaug (2010), primary data usually excels secondary data sources, due to the fact that they are collected exactly according to the topic and corresponded to the certain purpose of the research. However, primary data collection is a difficult process, which is not always dependent on the author and can be lengthy process. Nevertheless, a good thesis is not possible without using primary data. Next part will present different options of collecting primary data.

Firstly, the author will find an appropriate theoretical framework, so that the empirical study will be done. The empirical study will contain two interviews. The first one will be with the owner of the case company Amani Dress – A. Amirdzhanyan, and the second one with the Social Media Marketing specialist. In order to answer the question about Finnish customers, it is important to analyze the potential market. Due to this fact, the Internet survey will be conducted among students of Lahti University of Applied Sciences and other Finnish people. Secondly, in order to get a holistic view of the context and better understand the material in order to answer the research questions, the author will use secondary data sources, articles about Social Media Marketing and other sources, including Internet resources as well.

Figure 1 represents the data collection methods for this thesis.

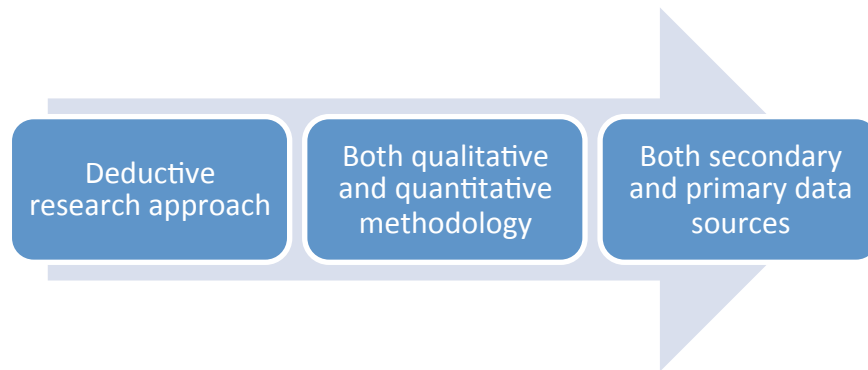


FIGURE 1. Data collection methods.

To sum up, the research will be conducted in accordance with a deductive approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Furthermore, both primary and secondary data sources will be used.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

In order to achieve the main goal of the thesis and present the Social Media Marketing Plan for Amani Dress company, the thesis is divided into six parts.

The following figure illustrates the detailed structure of this thesis.



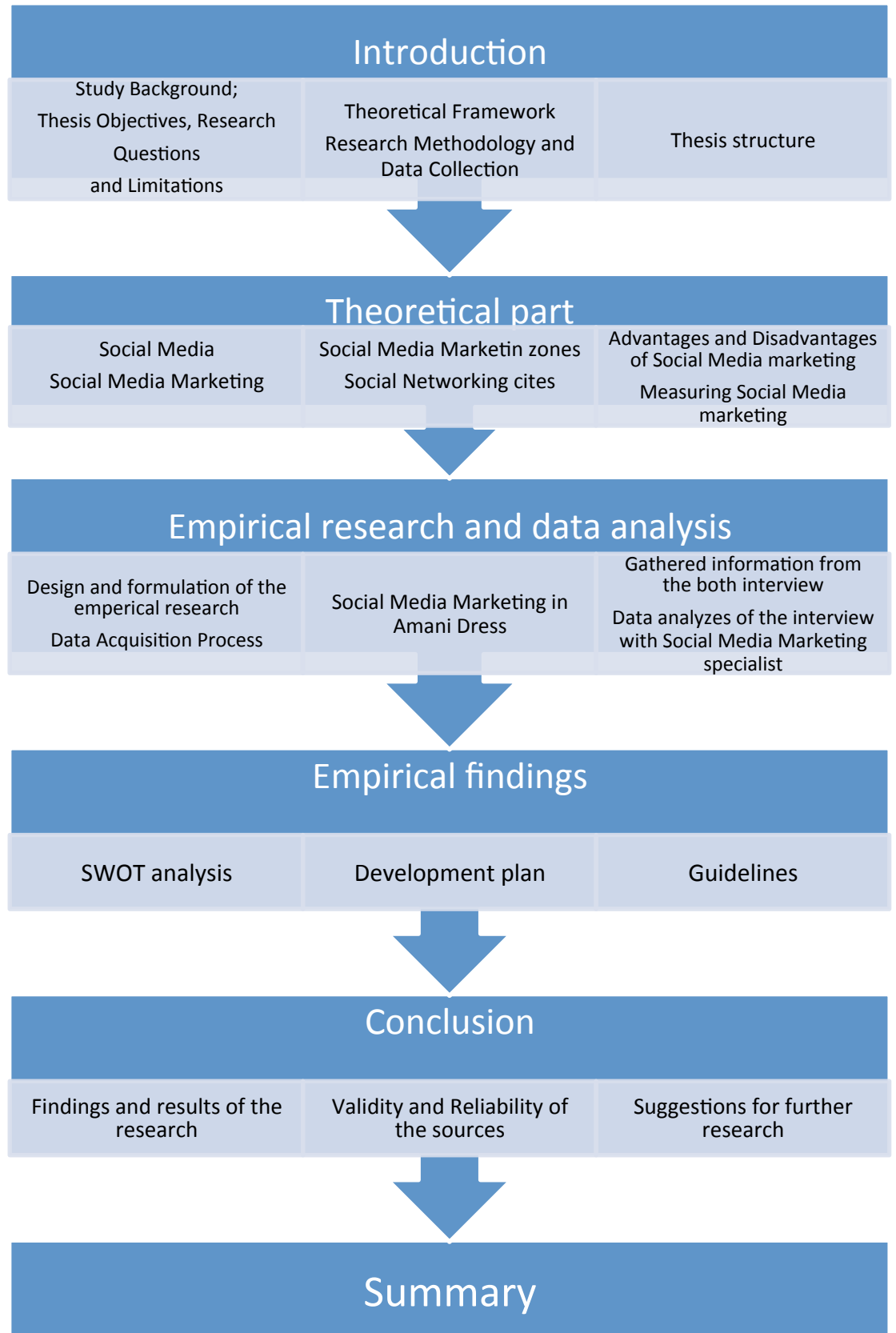


FIGURE 2. Thesis structure

This thesis consists of two main parts, a theoretical part and an empirical part. The first chapter discusses the general ideas of the thesis, which are related to previous studies, the interest of research, research problem, research objectives, and research structure.

The second chapter provides the theoretical part of the thesis. This part is based on the main concepts and terms of the Social Media Marketing in a more detailed way.

The third chapter explains empirical research and data analysis of the thesis. The research approach, the data acquisition process and the background information of the case company will also be demonstrated, as well as the way in which the data will be analyzed. At the end of the chapter, the information gathered through the interview with the CEO of Amani Dress A. Amirdzhanyan, and the Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland will be presented. In addition, the survey results attended by the Finnish women will be disclosed.

In chapter 4, the development plan for the case company with a detailed description is completed. Also, the proposed guidelines to implement efficient Social Media Marketing in Finland for Amani Dress are disclosed.

Chapter 5 draws the answers on research questions, as well as appraises the reliability and the validity of the research. This part is also presented suggestions for further research. Chapter 6 provides a brief summary of all main thesis' ideas and findings.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the theoretical part of the study will be presented. The terms used are defined. Furthermore, the theme about Social Media in marketing will be disclosed with using of 4P's and 4C's concepts. In addition, the chapter will introduce what opportunities and challenges Social Media Marketing brings to a company. At the conclusion of this chapter, different goals, strategies and tactics will be defined, as well as Social Media Marketing evaluation.

To begin with, it is logical to define the term Social Media. Social Media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010.)

To put it simply, Social Media is a new way of communication. Day by day thousands of people use Social Media's platforms to discuss different topics, share information, thoughts and experiences about the topic of their interest. Such exchange of information provides another opportunity for new knowledge including information about new products. From this point of view, Social Media makes the dialogue between the company and the customer stronger. (Tuten & Solomon 2013.)

### 2.1 Social media zones

As our main topic is Social Media it is important to categorize its zones. This process is sophisticated, because of a large amount of networks available. Furthermore, fast changing of different social networks is also a problem. However, Solomon and Tuten (2014) offer their system of categorizing social media into 4 following zones: social community, social publishing, social commerce and social entertainment .

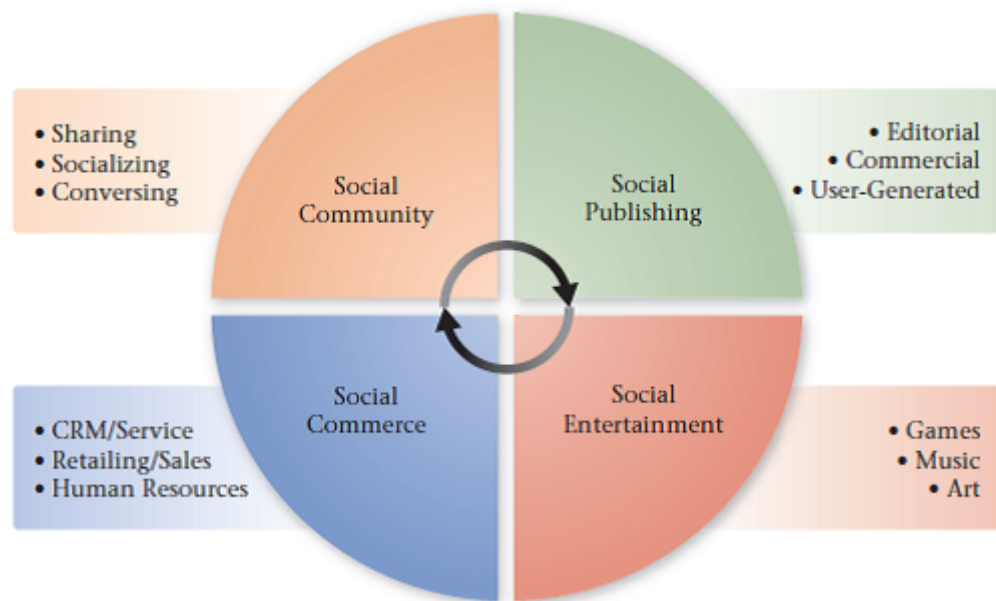


FIGURE 3. Social media zones (Tuten, Solomon 2014, 4).

According to Solomon and Tuten (2014), the first zone, is Social Community zone. The zone includes such social media networks, which allow direct communication and socialization for the users. It includes different forums, social networking sites and message boards, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+. The second zone is Social Publishing zone. The main idea of this zone is to deliver different content of information to the users. For example, Youtube, Picasa, Flickr and different blogs are included in Social Publishing zone. Next zone is called Social Entertainment zone. This zone emphasizes games, music and other entertainments. It includes SecondLife, Myspace and Finnish site Habbo.fi. The fourth and last zone is Social Commerce zone, which is more oriented to commercial part, such as Facebook, Groupon, and TripAdvisor.

## 2.2 Social Networking Sites

Nowadays, people spend a big part of their time for the surfing on different social networking sites. According to Jue, Marr and Kassotaki (2010), social networking site is a website where users can exchange different information with each other and create beneficial relationships.

The analysis conducted by Statistic Finland (2015) shows that 56 % of Finnish population between the ages of 16 to 74, has used social media during the last three months.

# The usage of social media in Finland

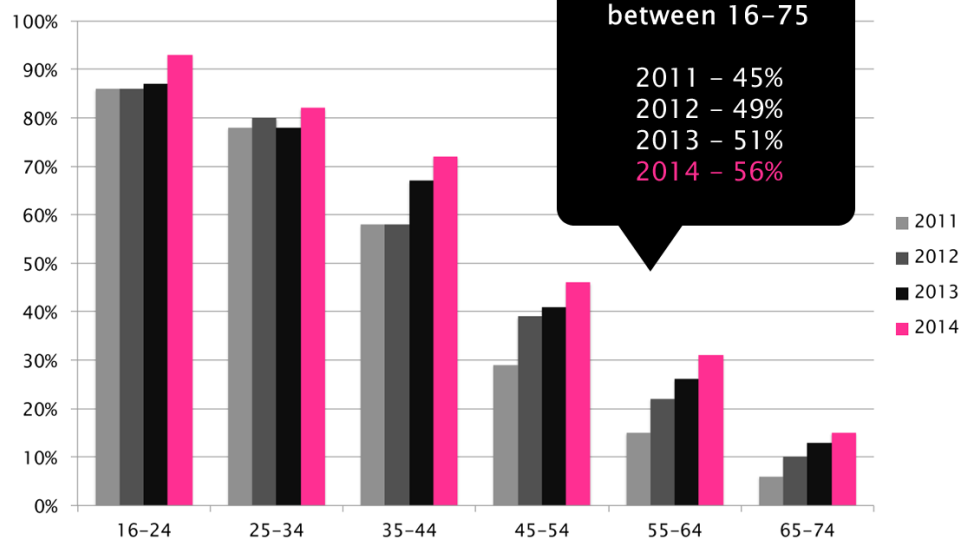


FIGURE 4. The usage of social media in Finland from 2011 to 2014 in total aged between 16-75 (Statistic Finland 2015).

However, in order to answer the main question of this thesis and help Amani Dress company to improve their social media strategy in Finland, it is important to analyze which social networking sites are popular among Finnish citizens. According to Buzzador (2014), the most popular social

networking sites among Finnish citizens are Facebook (82%), Instagram (15%), and Twitter (5%).

*Facebook* – is the largest social media channel, which people use “to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what’s going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them” (Facebook 2015).

*Instagram* - is a visual content sharing network, which focused on the sharing photos and videos with others (Instagram 2015).

*Twitter* - is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140-character messages called "tweets"(Twitter 2015).

Moreover, it is important for the company to understand what the purpose of social media to the user is. The research conducted by The Statistic Portal (2015) shows that 32% of Finnish people use social media platforms to buy clothing and footwear online.

The figure below presents the most “recent online purchased product” categories in Finland in 2015.

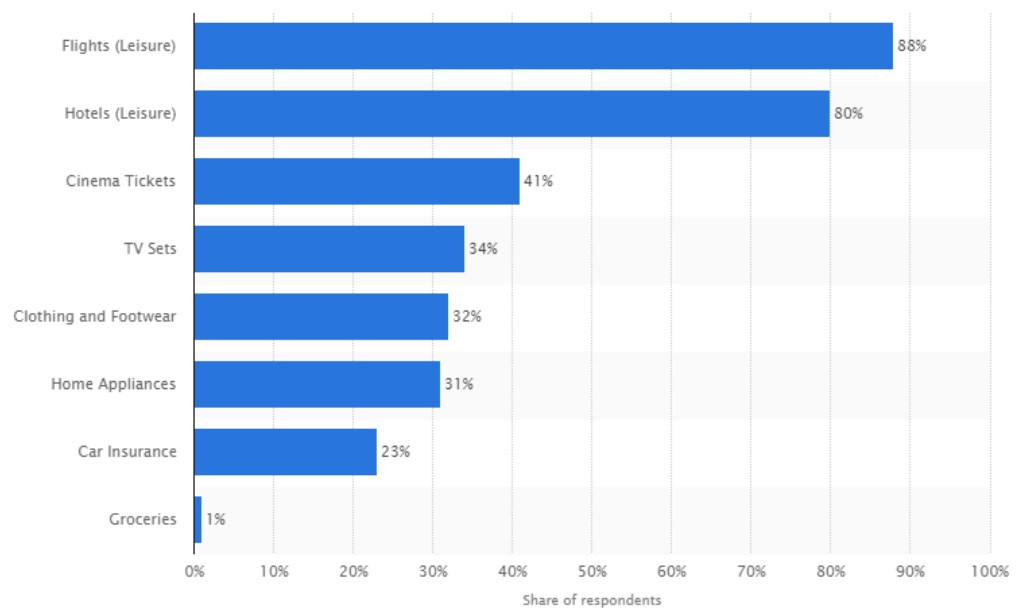


FIGURE 5. The most recent online purchased product categories in Finland in 2015 (Adapted from The Statistic Portal).

Given the fact that Amani Dress offers to their clients evening dresses, it is important to note this information for future research.

### 2.3 Social Media in Marketing

As mentioned before, the use of different social media platforms is huge. Nowadays, social media is not only about communication between people, but from a business point of view, it is about an absolutely new way for customers to raise their voice. Now, social media give companies even more than just new customers; they give customers' feedback that can help to improve the business. (Waters & Lester, 2010.) Based on this, social media give a new approach to communication between customer – client. According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre (2011), social media can now impact a firm's sales reputation and even survival. Consequently, companies, employing Social Media Marketing, can have big advantages.

**Social Media Marketing** is a “promotional activity whereby a business targets customers or prospects through social media sites in an effort to increase sales, strengthen brand loyalty, or achieve other business goals” (Wilson 2010).

When talking about Social Media Marketing, it is important to introduce two concepts: 4P's and 4C's of marketing. In traditional marketing, companies usually use a marketing mix in their strategies in order to reach concrete goals. The idea of 4P's is to sell a certain *product*, at the right *price*, using the most efficient *promotion*, through the right distribution channel ( *place* ) (Bennet 1997).

The first author who used marketing mix was McCarthy (1960). He referred to it as "4P's" and explained it meaning as translating marketing planning into practice (Bennet 1997). Since that time, 4P's model successfully using by main economists in business sphere. The first element of the marketing mix is a Product (good or servers), which satisfy

customer needs and wants. Product is "anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need" (Kotler and Armstrong 2009).

The next element is Place. According to Yudelson (1999), place is "everything given by the acquirer in terms of money, time and effort to obtain the product". Place is the third element of the marketing mix, presented by McCarthy. Place is all companies activities, which make a product available, such as logistics, distribution channels, and transportation. The last element of the traditional marketing mix is Promotion. Kotler & Armstrong (2014) define it as the activity, which communicates the value of the product and assures customer to buy the product.

The picture below is briefly presented each of the 4P's points.



FIGURE 6. The Marketing Mix components: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion (Kotler & Armstrong 2014).

As aforementioned, the development of the information and communication technologies had an impact on the traditional economy and, as a result, the new discipline of Internet Marketing was established.



In Internet marketing, one of the most important ideas is in communication and cooperation between customer and seller, where the final goal is to satisfy customer's needs. (Hajli 2015.)

This transition, in its turn, had an impact on the traditional marketing mix concept and update model of 4P's model was found in Lauterborn's 4C's. Lauterborn introduced new 4C's model and replaced Product with Customer Value, Price with Cost, Place with Convenience and Promotion with Communication. This model is equivalent to the traditional 4Ps but viewed from a customer perspective. Constantinides (2006), suggested that the customer is the focal aspect in the Internet era, so the customer-orientated 4C's model is more effective in today's world.

In the new 4C's model, not only is the *product* important, but so is the *customer* who will purchase the product. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2014), companies sell product, whereas customers are buying *value* and solutions to problems. So the idea is to provide the solution to each *customer*, rather than just sell the product and as a result satisfy buyers needs and wants.

Also, in the 4C's model price is just one of the costs for the customer who wants to buy a product. During the purchasing process, there are additional costs such as transportation and usage costs. (Cheng & Nault 2007.) The new 4C's model also replace place with convenience. The idea of the third C is to make the purchasing process of the product as convenient for the customer as possible (Hamilton 2005).

Communication is Lauterborn's last element of the marketing mix. The Internet gives new opportunities for communication between the customer and the seller, and now companies try to be social through social media in order to reach more customers. (Fill 2006.)

## 2.4 The challenges and opportunities of Social Media Marketing for small businesses

Weber (2009) explicates that Social Media Marketing can be effective for small businesses as well as big corporations. He argues that for small and medium size companies using platforms can be even more effective and easier and can give maximum advantages.

Given that social media has appeared quickly, many people are still skeptical about the company's advertising on the Internet and do not believe in the effectiveness of this method, while the statistics show the different picture. According to Hubspot, 92% of marketers approved that in 2014 Social Media Marketing was a successful and important part for their companies. However, another reputable company - Social Media Examiner, claims that among companies, which have already used Social Media, 85% are not sure that it is the best way to promote their businesses. Further explanation will be given on some of the benefits of using Social Media Marketing.

According to Garretson (2008), consumers use social media not only to research information about the product but also to communicate with the company, which sells the product and with other customers to share useful experience.

Therefore, Jayson DeMers, who is CEO of the Internet Marketing company specializing in SEO (Search Engine Optimization), affirms that Social Media Marketing can give great opportunities for raising awareness. Due to the fact that more and more people use social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, it is a good way to the company to make an account there, in order to advertise their business and increase brand recognition.

Particularly, small business owners can easily see social media opportunities against traditional methods. For example, Social Media Marketing can spread all necessary information and reach a large number

of people in a short time. In addition, the great opportunity of Social Media Marketing is direct communication with the clients. Small businesses can build strong relationships with the customers, asking about their opinions and responding to changing demands. (DeMers 2014.)

Furthermore, one important advantage is that social media platforms are more cost-effective to reach highly targeted markets when compared to TV, newspaper, and other traditional channels. Advertising through traditional media often requires large financial investments, whereas, the majority social media networks are free and open to everyone. Usually, small businesses do not have significant resources for investment in advertising, as big corporations have. That is why Social Media Marketing have a substantial advantage. (DeMers 2014.)

According to DeMers (2014), it is a good opportunity for a R&D department to communicate with the clients and get quick feedback about the product or service, in order to correct deficiencies in the shortest time. Last but not least advantage of using Social Media Marketing for small businesses is that it increases brand loyalty. According to a report published by the Texas Tech University, companies which have accounts on different social media platforms get higher loyalty from the buyers.

The following figure presents advantages of Social Media Marketing according to DeMaers 2013.

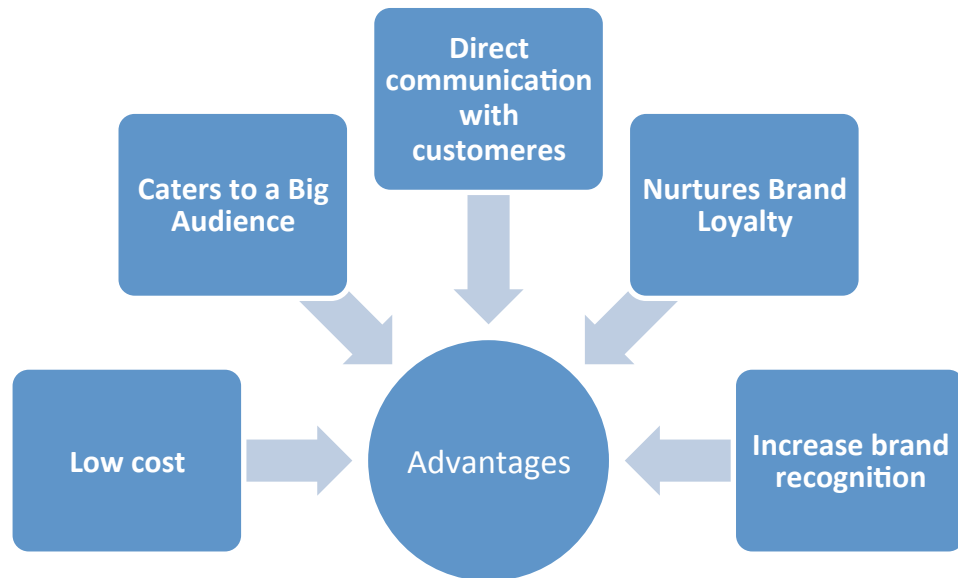


FIGURE 7. Advantages of Social Media Marketing (Adapted from DeMaers: The Top Benefits of Social Media Marketing 2013).

It is also important to take into account the fact that Social Media Marketing has both advantages and disadvantages. One of the drawbacks of which is that the small business owners struggle with many newborn challenges and weaknesses in a Social Media Marketing campaign. The majority of entrepreneurs do not know how to use Social Media Marketing efficiently or do not have a clear strategy. However, there is an important point to realize, that Social Media Marketing is not about creating a profile on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, but it is about long and sometimes complicated process, which requires efforts and time investment. In order to achieve a successful Social Media Marketing implementation, it is important to managing social media account day by day and posting engaging information and ideas. (Abrons 2013.)

Moreover, according to Drury (2008), Social Media Marketing requires an absolutely new way of communication with customers. In contradistinction to traditional media, where the main idea was in delivering necessary information about the company to the client, Social Media Marketing is more about interaction with the customer and exchanging the ideas. As a result, a small business owner should have special skills to successful

communication with the buyers or invest in social media consultants. The last thing, which is important to know, is a negative feedback. Customers can easily write on the company's page not only about their good experience but about negative one as well. It is important to understand that and to react as quickly as possible before it ruins the brand's reputation. (Abrons 2013.)

The figure below shows main disadvantages of using social media according to Abrons 2013.

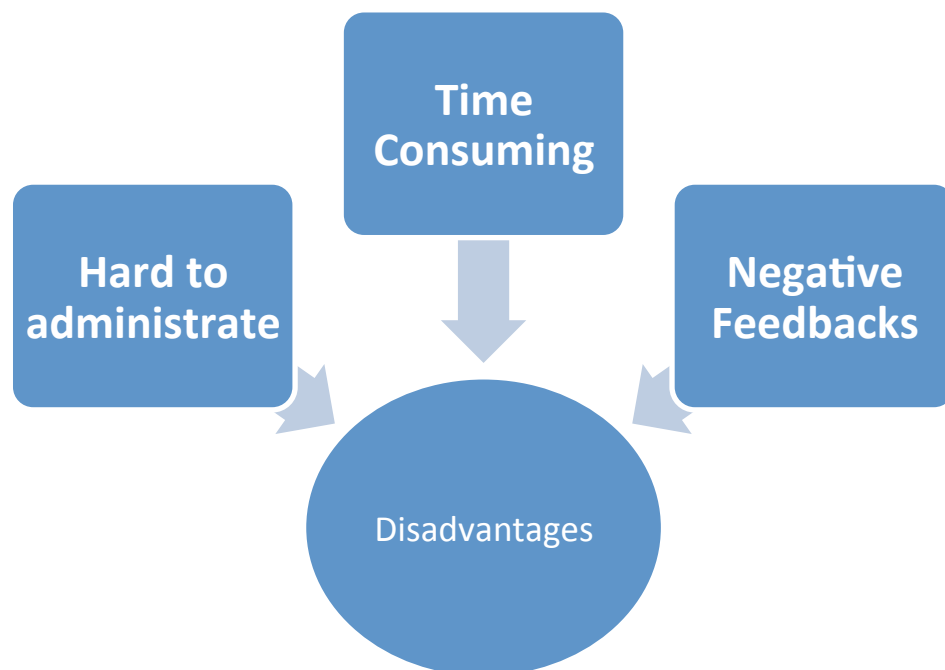


FIGURE 8. Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing (Adapted from Abrons: The disadvantages of using social networks as marketing tools 2013).

Above all, Social Media Marketing is pronouncedly useful and can be extremely effective for small businesses, but it is important to realize all difficulties and have a clear plan how to operate online.

## 2.5 Objectives and strategies for Social Media Marketing

One important point, which should be taken into account before starting Social Media Marketing process, it is defining the objectives of the company. Obviously, what different companies have different goals and defining these goals before embarking Social Media Marketing will lead to the successful strategy.

There are some prevalent objectives for Social Media Marketing:

- Improved Reputation of the company
- Increased Brand Awareness
- Improved Online Conversation with the customer
- Increased traffic to company website
- Increased popularity of the company

According to Weinberg (2009), objectives should be:

S – specific

M – measurable

A – attainable

R – realistic

T – timely

After defining the goals, next step is to determine the Social Media Marketing strategy. Social Media Marketing strategy is the process where the main goal is to orient the company to the right way in order to achieve certain goals.

According to The SMB Group report, one in five small business organizations has not got social media strategy. That is a bad tendency, due to the fact that companies which do not have Social Media Marketing strategy, are less competitive in social media sphere (SMB Group 2012).

Therefore, determine a Social Media Marketing strategy is a necessary and significant step.

Hay (2009) explicates that there are three main areas, which important to remember when planning social media strategy: interactivity, sharing and collaboration. Interactively can be achieved by online communicating with customers and posting blog posts. Sharing can be achieved by uploading different images and videos. Collaboration can be obtained by facilitating to social bookmarking sites.

## 2.6 Tactics for Social Media Marketing process

After the important step of defining the Social Media Marketing strategy according to company's goals, it is necessary to determine the tactics. According to John (2011), small business owners should be based on the following hierarchy (Figure 9) when choosing the tactics.

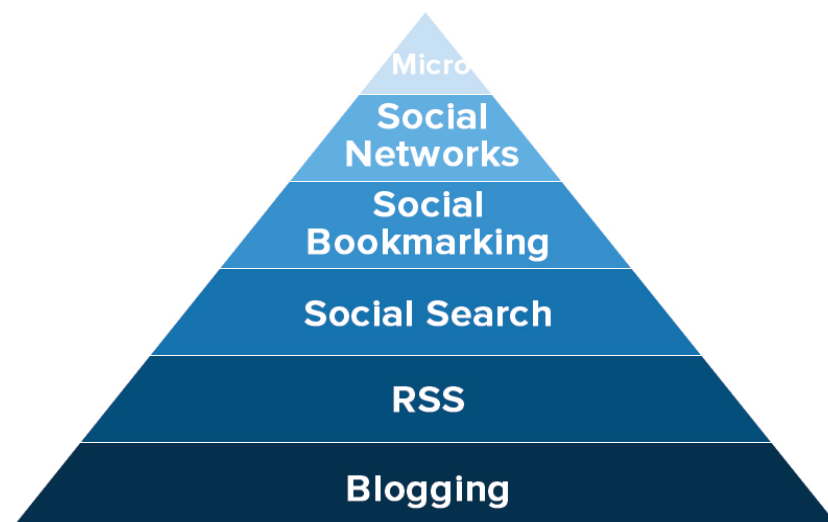


FIGURE 9. Hierarchy of Social Media Marketing tool viewpoint (John 2011).

1. Blogging is a foundation of the pyramid. The first steps for any companies when starting Social Media Marketing are reading, commenting and writing blogs.
2. RSS is a tool to help businesses repurpose, republish and create content.
3. Social Search is very important according to John (2011) because it helps small businesses to stimulate their reputation.
4. Social Bookmaking is a good way to find out new channels to small business owners and generate extra search traffics.
5. Social Networks – are networks, which can help small businesses branch out to gain advantages of the numbers of potential prospects. Nevertheless, social networks take a lot of time in order to succeed.
6. Micro – are social platforms, such as Twitter. They are really important part of the social media mix and it is no coincidence that they are on the top of the pyramid. The reason is that without blogging and other steps of the pyramid, engagement on Micro may not go very efficiency.

John (2011) claims that despite the fact that the process for meeting the Social Media Marketing goals is universal, the tools, which required to meet them are different. For example, for some companies Twitter will be a more effective platform to start with, however for another small organization, Facebook will be more suitable. According to John (2011), small businesses should learn exactly how to operate in each step of the pyramid and in this case, this process will be fruitful. At the same time, following pyramid is presented what small business owners also view the tactics in Social Media Marketing less from a tool standpoint and more from an objectives standpoint.





FIGURE 10. Hierarchy of Marketing objectives viewpoint (John 2011).

As a result, each company can choose the suitable hierarchy model to operate, no matter it is tool or objectives viewpoint. The main idea is to pre-define tactics and strictly follow the strategy.

## 2.7 Social Media Marketing evaluation

The previous part gives the reader a more detailed understanding of different elements, which are important during planning Social Media Marketing process. After discussion on goals, strategies and tactics for Social Media Marketing, it is necessary to disclose the concept of measuring Social Media Marketing. Evaluating the Social Media Marketing is an important part, which can help to direct the company's activities in the right direction and get the maximum profit.

“Using social media but not measuring the results in any way is a bit like advertising your business in a magazine and not measuring the results – time and money are potentially wasted,” warns Lynsey Sweales, a

member of the DMA Social Media Council and CEO of SocialB UK (Davey 2014).

Based on a target marketing survey published by Haaga-Helia University and Dingle company, 70% of Finnish business owners find it difficult to measure ROI (Return of Investments) in social media (Dingle 2013). For this reason, understanding the importance of clear Marketing strategy is not enough and the question appears - how to understand that Social Media Marketing is working for them?

According to Weber (2009), there are still not clear how and what to measure. However, understanding what a company wants from the social media strategy to achieve can help to measure company's success.

At the same time, Sterne (2010) specifies that measurements should be with certain objectives, otherwise, they are senseless. It is clear that each of goals needs a different measurement approach, however, each of them falls into one of two classic metric categories: qualitative or quantitative (number-based) (Hay 2009). According to Baker (2013), **qualitative** and **quantitative** metrics are called Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Key Performance Indicators – is a “social media metric that indicates the progress of strategies in achieving goals” (Baker 2013). Quantitative KPIs allow estimating the effectiveness of social media strategy by using data and numbers and measure return on investment (ROI) from Social Media Marketing efforts. However, qualitative KPIs allow estimating the impact of Social Media Marketing activities on goals, such as engagement, influence, and branding awareness. (Baker 2013.)

First of all, in order to measure Social Media Marketing efficiency, it is important to clarify the company's goals. Secondly, it is necessary to choose a mixture of qualitative and quantitative KPIs. There are various KPIs to choose from, and the idea is to find the most suitable for company's goals. Thirdly, it is necessary to set a benchmark. Small business owner can track the results and progress by comparing them

with baseline. The fourth step is to report the results and compare them to what company's owner expected. The fifth and final step is to review carefully the measurement program. It is the really important point, due to the fact that consistent and thorough analyze will help to track the success of channels like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. (Hay 2009.)

### 3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the empirical research will be presented. At the beginning of the chapter, the research methods, as well as the survey design, are disclosed. Then, the Data Acquisition Process are presented, where the author's actions are shown monthly. After that, the current situation in Social Media Marketing sphere of the case company is disclosed. At the end of this part, the results are shown and analyzed.

#### 3.1 Design and formulation of the empirical research

Sauders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) argue that research is what “people undertake to find out things in a systematic way, thereby increasing their knowledge.”

According to Kothari (2004), empirical research is based on observation and it derives knowledge from actual experiences instead of theory. Empirical research gives information about people behavior, which is priceless for the research.

As mentioned before, there are two alternatives to conduct the research: qualitative and quantitative. Which method more suitable for the concrete thesis is decided the author according to his/her research question. Qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomena and it focuses on revealing motives and aspirations. However, quantitative research is evaluating quantities or amounts (Kothari 2004). In the current research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.

Furthermore, the used methodology of this study is case study research. The main reason for choosing this kind of study method is the desire to research special and complex subject in detail. According to Yin (1994), the methodology consists of three tasks: designing a case study, collecting the study's data, analyzing the data, and presenting and reporting the results.

The first part of the empirical research consists of two interviews: the first one with the CEO of Amani Dress – A. Amirdzhanyan and the second one with the Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland. The interview with Amani Dress' owner was done via personnel meeting, where the basic knowledge about the company was gathered. The current situation in Amani Dress company concerning Social Media Marketing activities was found out, which will be disclosed lately. Moreover, was ascertained that the company have already analyzed the potential market of their interest and made sure that their product will find its place in Finland. However, the author found out that the case company did not know how to operate in Social Media Marketing sphere in Finland and how effective it will be.

The second interview was conducted with Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland via phone. The idea was to understand the particularities of Social Media Marketing in Finland in order to complete the thesis with more specific information. The main points of the interview will be presented afterward.

As mentioned before, the second part of the empirical research consists of the survey among Finnish women. The knowledge from this survey is the main source of primary data. The idea of this survey was to understand how the customers' target group use social media and how Social Media Marketing is influenced on them.

Based on the survey results, which will be presented lately, was found out that the overwhelming majority of Finnish women use social networks on a daily basis and are actively interested in companies' posts, which have accounts on different social media sites. The customers' target group are women from 16 and above, and the respondents, who took part in the survey are also older than 16. The total number of the respondents is 126 women. Only Finnish women were selected as the case company specializes on the Finnish market. The language of the survey is English. The survey consists of 6 multiply-questions, however, two of them have

the space to open answer. The survey form is represented at the appendix.

### 3.2 Data Acquisition Process

Gantt chart which is a holistic view of the whole process of collecting both primary and secondary source of the thesis is presented below.

TABLE 1. Gantt chart of Data Acquisition Process.

Task name	2016		
	January	February	March
Desk research	✕		
Create interviews and survey		✕	
Conduct interviews and launch the survey		✕	✕
Data analyses and results			✕

The data collection process consists of desk research, survey, and interview. In this particular case, the author divided this process into 4 steps: desk research, where the secondary data sources were analyzed,

creation of survey and interviews, launching the survey and conducting the interviews and finally, analyzing the data and summing up the results.

The desk research was started in January 2016. That was the first step of writing this thesis and during 4 weeks already existed data about main marketing concepts and Social Media Marketing were collected. After that, the author designed the interviews questions and created questions for the survey. When the interviews were ready, that was time to launching the survey for the Lahti University of Applied Sciences students and other Finnish citizens. The survey was done by Webropol program and a link to the survey was sent via email to the Finnish women.

At the same time with the launching the survey, the author organized an in-depth interview with the owner of the case company Amani Dress – A. Amirdzhanyan. That was a personal meeting, where the author knew a lot of useful information about the current situation in marketing of the company and expectations of Amani Dress owner about the author's research concerning Finland. Furthermore, in March 2016, the author of the thesis conducted the phone interview with the specialist in Social Media Marketing in Finland in order to understand better how to organize Social Media Marketing in Finland from a professional point of view. Both interviews are used as a one source of information in the current research.

### 3.3 Social Media Marketing in Amani Dress

Founded in 2010 in Saint- Petersburg, Russia, Amani Dress developed a unique and fresh company, which produces evening dresses for special events of their customers. Due to the great success, this company became widely popular among Russian customers. The target customers are women from 16 and above.



FIGURE 11. Dress model from Amani Dress (Amani Dress 2016).

The main marketing channel of the company is Social Media, and they actively use main Social networks, such as Instagram, Vkontakte, and Youtube, in order to reach more customers. Amani Dress operates only in Russia at the moment and has already become really popular among Russian customers, however, their new goal is to conquer the Finnish market.

Despite the fact, that Amani Dress is an active user of different social media platforms, mostly their activities are focused on Instagram. They have shared 2,839 photos and have 33,2 thousand followers. In Instagram, they regularly publish beautiful photos of their dresses, information about discounts and special offers and other interesting details. Moreover, the company's customers share pictures in their dresses and give feedback daily. (Amani Dress Instagram account 2016.)



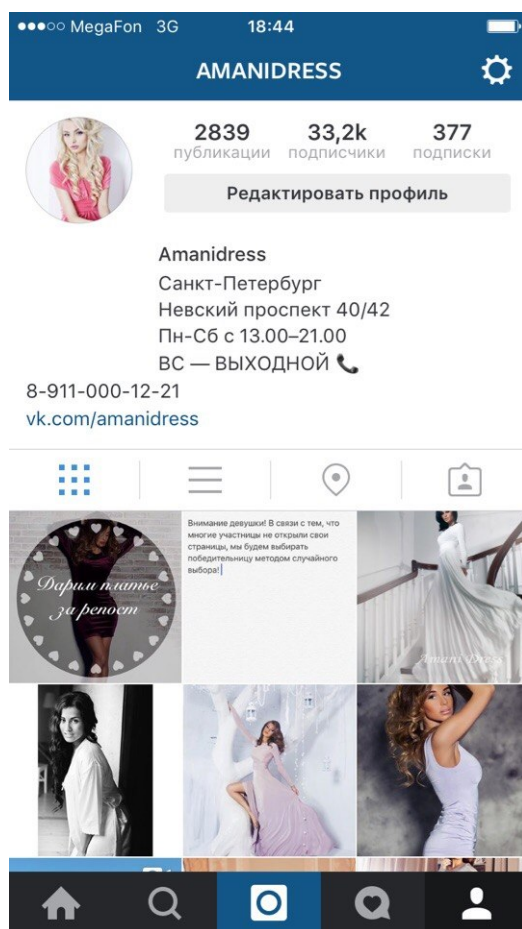


FIGURE 12. Screenshot of Amani Dress company's Instagram account (Amani Dress 2016).

Furthermore, Amani Dress company organizes presentations of their dresses on the podium and afterward uploads the videos on Youtube. However, they still do not have their own Youtube channel.

Also, Amani Dress reaches their customers through Vkontakte platform. Vkontakte is the largest European online social networking service but is especially popular among Russian-speaking users. The Vkontakte page of the company offers information about the production, the location and offers a possibility to give a feedback in real time directly to the owner of the company. That is a great advantage to read feedback for doubters' customers and at the same time a good chance to control subordinates. Furthermore, on the Vkontakte platform the company has more than 74

thousand followers, that also tell about wide popularity of Amani Dress among Russians. (Vkontakte page 2016)

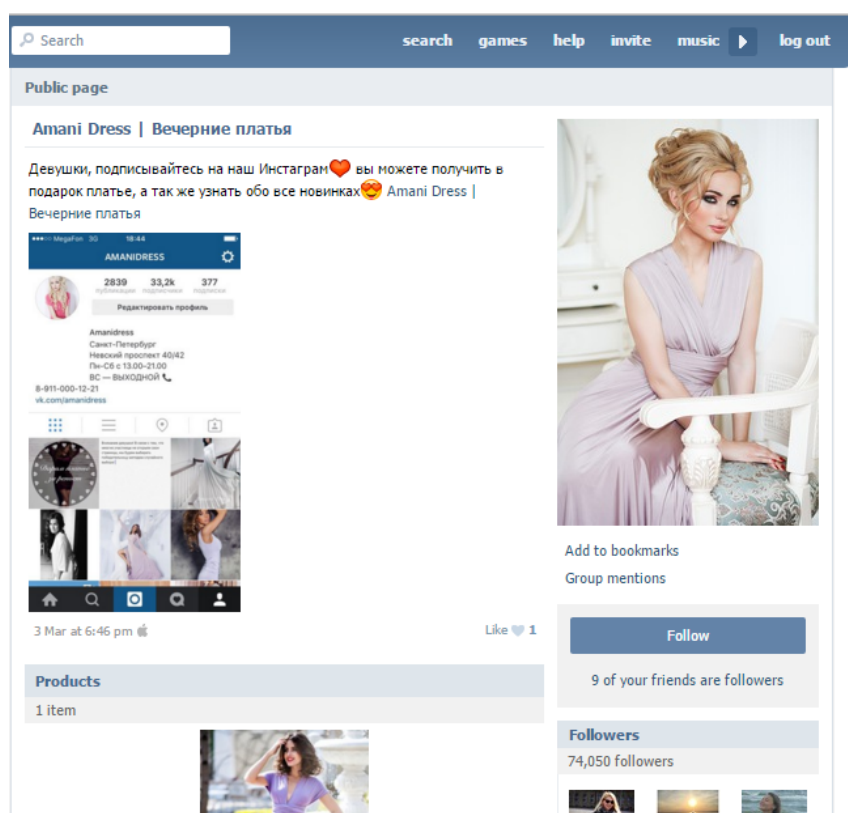


FIGURE 13. Screenshot of Amani Dress company's Vkontakte account (Amani Dress 2016).

Due to the fact that all these pages in social media platforms are in the Russian language, they would like to adapt them to the Finnish customers, directly after the author's research and after analyzing the survey results to understand whether or not their product is interesting to Finnish customers.

According to Meyerson (2010), Social Media Marketing is important and effective part of marketing strategy only if it is used actively and rationally. Amani Dress company is familiar with Social Media Marketing and use it efficiently, but now they have a new goal and would like to reach the Finnish market. This thesis is intended to achieve this task.

### 3.4 Data analyses of the interview with Social Media Marketing specialist

This subchapter will provide the information from the interview with a Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland, in order to better understand Finnish Social Media Market.

According to the interview, Social Media Marketing has become a huge trend in Finland in the past few years. The main reason for that is a growth interest of Finnish people in different social media networking sites. The expert refers to the statistics: more than 3 million Finns are using social media platforms regularly. Taking into account the fact that the population of Finland is about 5.5 million (2014), the number of online users is really huge.

In Finland the most popular social media network is Facebook. More than 2,5 million Finns use Facebook, that means that company which decided to penetrate the Finnish market should have an account on Facebook in order to reach the customer. (Interview of the Social Media Marketing specialist 2016.)

Instagram is the second popular social media platform in Finland, however, it is usually used by young Finnish citizens. Despite the fact that Finns are multilingual, companies should create their social media networks in the local language to gain the trust of Finnish customers. (Interview of the Social Media Marketing specialist 2016.)

If the new company is planning to use Social Media Marketing in Finland, it is a good idea to start with a complete audit of company's marketing activities, and create a marketing plan. Furthermore, in order to achieve better results, an outside expert with extensive experience in required industry should be hired. (Interview of the Social Media Marketing specialist 2016.)

### 3.5 Data analyses of the survey

In this subchapter, the author will provide findings from the survey concerning Social Media. 126 Finnish women took part in the survey and all of them are older than 16 years old, that means that these results are appropriate to the company's target group.

The first question was about the age of the respondents. Most of them are from 17 to 25 (84%) that is not a surprise because, basically, the link on the survey was sent to students. The second largest age group (13%) are women from 26 to 35 and 4% of respondents are older than 35 years old. None of the respondents is under 16. The figure below represents these results.

#### Social Media

##### 1. How old are you?

Number of respondents: 126

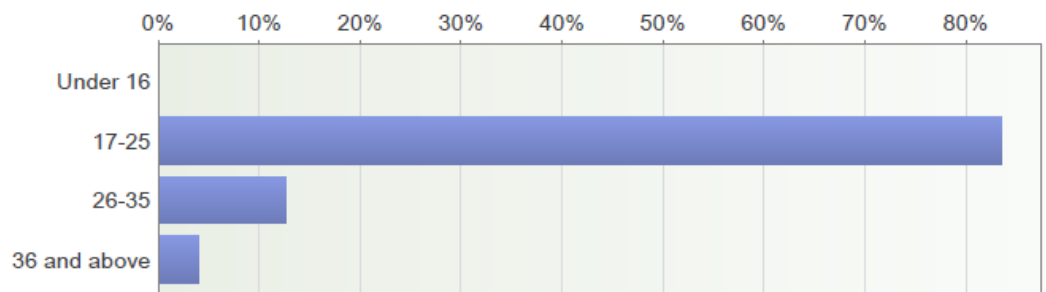


FIGURE 14. Age distribution of respondents.

The second question asked how many hours do the respondents use social media per day. The majority of them (46%) replied that they use social media platforms 5 and above hours per day. More than 38 % use social media 3 - 4 hours a day. Also, according to the survey, 13% of respondents use social media 1-2 hours everyday and just 2% of them do not use social media everyday. These results mean that Finnish women are the active users of different social networks and from this point of view

Social Media Marketing is an effective way to reach customers in this region.

2. How many hours do you use Social Media per day?

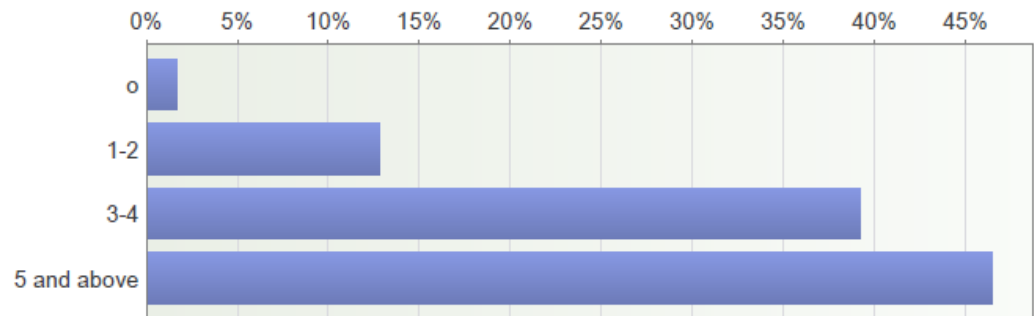


FIGURE 15. Usage of social media per day.

The third question was about advertising on social media channels. The undoubted majority of respondents (95%) answered that advertisement catches their attention on social media platforms. Only 5% of the respondents do not pay attention to advertising on different social media platforms. (Figure 16.) This result is very important for this thesis and confirms the effectiveness of Social Media Marketing.

### 3. Does advertisement on Social media channels catch your attention?

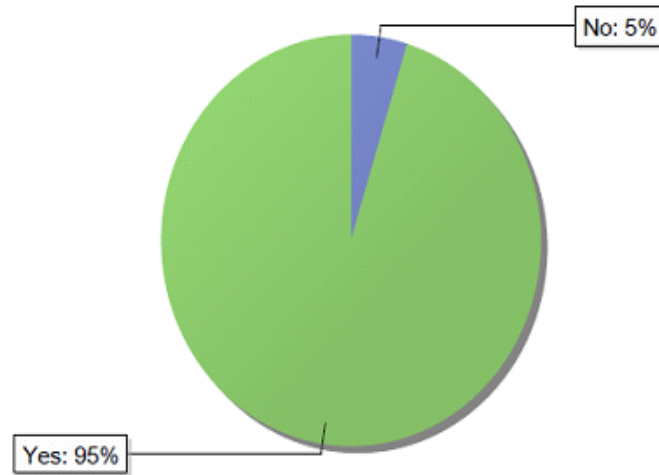


FIGURE 16. Respondents' attention to advertising on social media channels.

The fourth question was: *Do reviews, ratings and photos published on social media platforms affect respondents' final decision when they searching for new clothes?* 4% of them answered that these kinds of promotion do not affect them at all. However, 61% of respondents agree that different reviews, ratings and photos published on social media platforms affect them a lot when they searching for new clothes. Furthermore, 35% of the respondents affirm that feel the impact to some extent. (Figure 17.)

4. When searching for new clothes, do reviews, ratings and photos published on Social Media platforms affect your final decision?

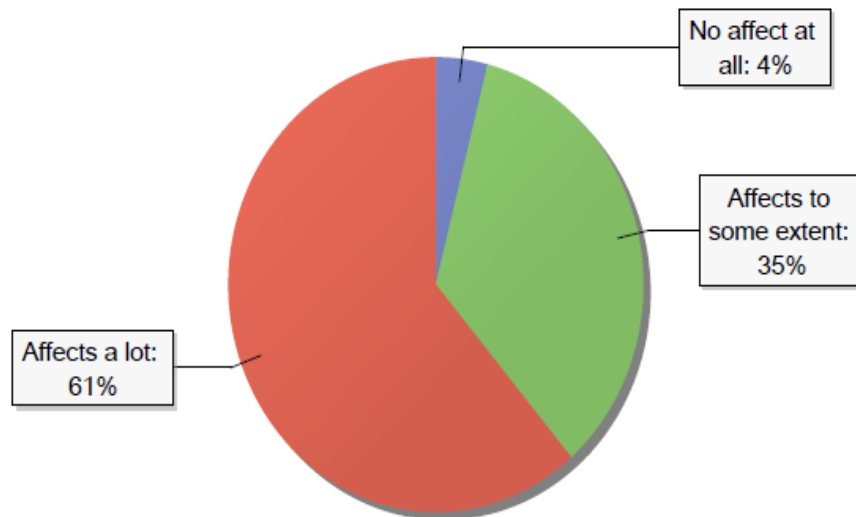


FIGURE 17. The influence of different kind of advertising on Social Media at the respondents' decision.

The next question asked the respondents to choose the most suitable option/s for them, which better describe their actions on different Social Media sites. According to the results, 95 out of 126 respondents subscribe to the pages, which promote clothes on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter etc. However, 74 respondents sometimes searching some Social Media platforms to find new clothes and the same amount of women are interested in news, photos, and special offers of shops they subscribe. Besides, the respondents pay attention to feedback and 73 of them also prefer to read reviews about the product they are interested in. A much lower amount of women (51) is ready to write feedback about the product they already bought. Results presented in the Figure below show that great amount of Finnish women are actively involved in the Social Media Marketing process.

5. Choose the most suitable option/s for you. More than one option can be selected.

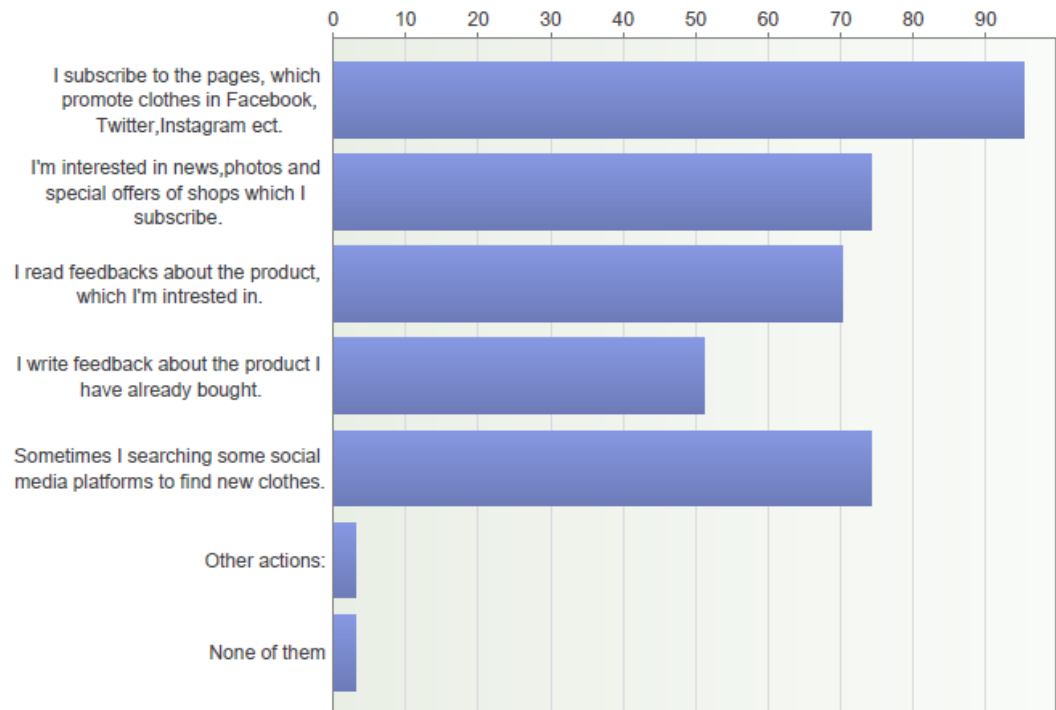


FIGURE 18. Respondents' activities on Social Media.

In the last question of the survey, the respondents could choose which Social Media channel they prefer when they looking for new clothes. The most popular platforms among Finnish women, when finding new clothes are Instagram (111) out of 126 and Facebook (76). Twitter and different fashion blogs are also rather popular. Youtube is less popular than others and only 10 people chose this option. (Figure 19.)



6. Which social networking channels do you prefer when looking for new clothes? More than one option can be selected.

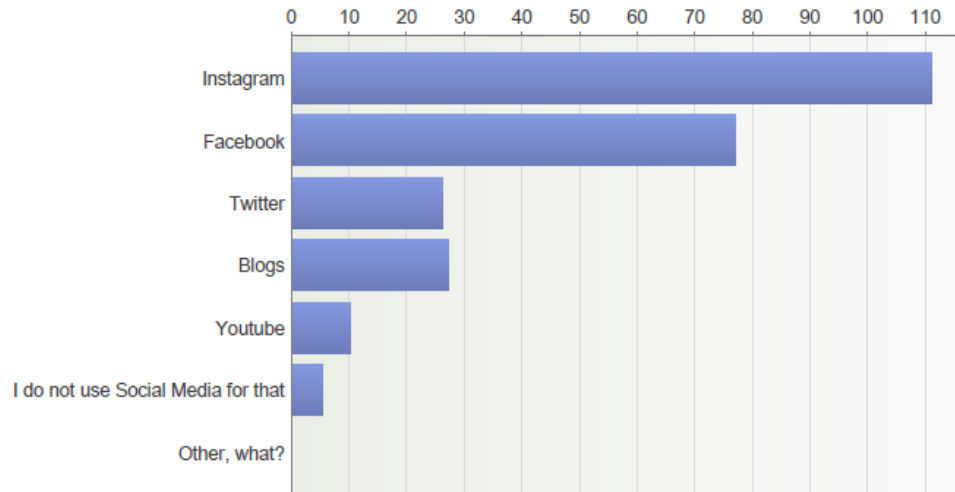


FIGURE 19. Social media platforms used when looking for new clothes.

The survey findings show that the Amani Dress company's target group actively use different social media platforms and spend more than 2 hours everyday on networking sites. What is also very important – these social media platforms attract their attention and influence on their final decision. Moreover, the target group is interested in news, photos, and special offers of shops they subscribe and searching different social media platforms to find new clothes. Also, feedback is an important part when choosing clothes and some of the respondents post their reviews about the product they already used. Mostly used platforms, when respondents looking for new, clothes are Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The case company should use these networking channels in Finland in order to find customers. All these findings the author will use in the Social Media Marketing development plan.

## 4 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

After data research is being analyzed, that is time to introduce a part-based on the theory and empirical finding. The data will be presented in the development plan for case company Amani Dress. The plan will consist of SWOT analysis, where the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats will be disclosed. Moreover, at the end of this part detailed and precise suggestions for Amani Dress company will be presented, considering the company's desire to penetrate in the Finnish market and attract Finnish customers.

### 4.1 SWOT analysis

According to Jain, Trehan & Trehan (2010), SWOT analysis is a tool, which broadly used by marketers, in order to collect the internal information from inside the organization and the external information from the market.

SWOT analysis consists of four elements: *Strengths*, *Weaknesses*, *Opportunities*, and *Threats*. Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors, however, Opportunities and Threats are external. (David 1993.)

When analyzing the survey findings were done, now that is time to implement SWOT analysis in order to identify company's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to create Social Media Marketing development plan.

Amani Dress company's SWOT analysis was done based on both theoretical and empirical research. Furthermore, SWOT analysis consists of the survey and interviews findings. Also, should be noted that benchmarking of Amani Dress company's social profiles on different social media platforms, such as Instagram, V Kontakte and Youtube was also into account, when conducting the analysis.

The figure below presents Amani Dress company's SWOT analysis.

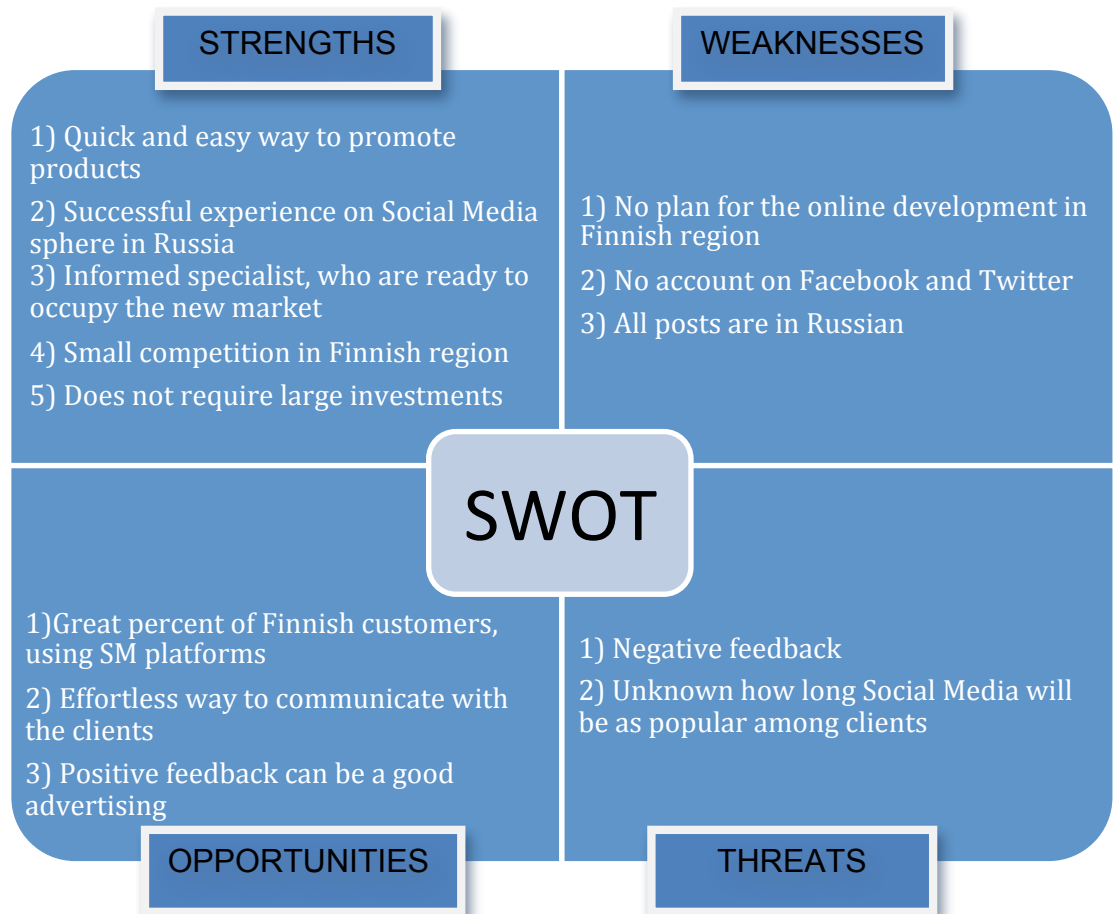


FIGURE 20. SWOT analysis of Amani Dress company's Social Media Marketing.

First of all, the author considered the internal factors of the company. According to results, which are presented in the figure above, strengths of using social media is that it is the easy and quick way to promote products. Social Media Marketing is really suitable for Amani Dress not only because the majority of social platforms are free or inexpensive but also because they can start their Social Media Marketing implementation, being far away from the Finnish market and before opening a retail shop in Helsinki. Furthermore, according to the interview with the owner of the company and analyzing social media profiles of Amani Dress, it is clear that they have already had a successful experience in social media sphere in Russia, so this knowledge will help to start Social Media Marketing in

Finland. Also, in Amani Dress company work well-educated specialists who are familiar with social media sphere and ready to occupy the Finnish market (Personnel Interview with the owner of Amani Dress 2016).

Moreover, the company has already analyzed the potential market and ascertained that there are few competitors, who produce the unique evening dresses. That is why the Amani Dress owner assured that they will find their place on the Finnish market. (Personnel Interview with the owner of Amani Dress 2016.)

However, the case company has also weaknesses. The main point is that they do not have a clear Social Media Marketing plan to successful operation on the Finnish market. Moreover, all content on different social media sites are in Russian, that unsuitable for Finnish customers.

Furthermore, Amani Dress does not have an account on Facebook but according to the survey results Facebook is one of the most popular social media networking sites to looking for new clothes among Finnish women. Moreover, some respondents answered that they also prefer to use Twitter to find new clothes. Based on these, the case company should create accounts on Facebook and Twitter to reach the greatest number of buyers.

As mentioned before, the great percent of Finns are the active users of different social media platforms that undoubtedly is a great advantage for the company. Furthermore, Social Media Marketing is an effortless way to directly communication with potential clients and especially it is important when the company penetrates a new market. Also, based on the survey results Finnish women prefer to read feedback of the product they are interested in and sometimes do not mind to write a review about the product they already bought. That means that Finnish women attach importance to others customer's opinions and positive reviews could become a good advertising for the company.

However, when planning SWOT analysis it is also important to take into account the potential threats the company can face with. As mentioned

before, feedback of the clients plays a big role in the decision-making process. The other side of the coin is negative reviews. When the company starts its Social Media Marketing implementation, it is important to realize the uncontrollability of customers' feedback. Negative reviews could become a real danger for company's reputation. Nevertheless, according to Evans (2010), negative feedback is not always a bad thing. Sometimes it is a good opportunity to show company's interest and concernment about the emerged issues. The last potential threat is that nobody can predict how long the social media will attract people's interest. Today social networking is a huge trend, but everything is changeable. That is why the company should always be ready to adapt to the specific situation.

#### 4.2 Action Plan for the case company Amani Dress

The main objective of the thesis is to present the development plan for Amani Dress company in order to improve their Social Media Marketing strategy. This action will help the case company to reach new customers in Finland and penetrate to the market. The basic part of the research was done, that is why it is time to present the development plan, where all author's suggestions will be included. The following action plan will be based on theoretical and empirical research of this study. In addition, the SWOT analysis will be used as one of the tools to finalize the development plan for the case company.

The proposed Social Media Marketing development plan consists of six sequential steps, which will help the case company to reach the main goal and successfully penetrate the Finnish market. This action plan is presented in Figure 21.

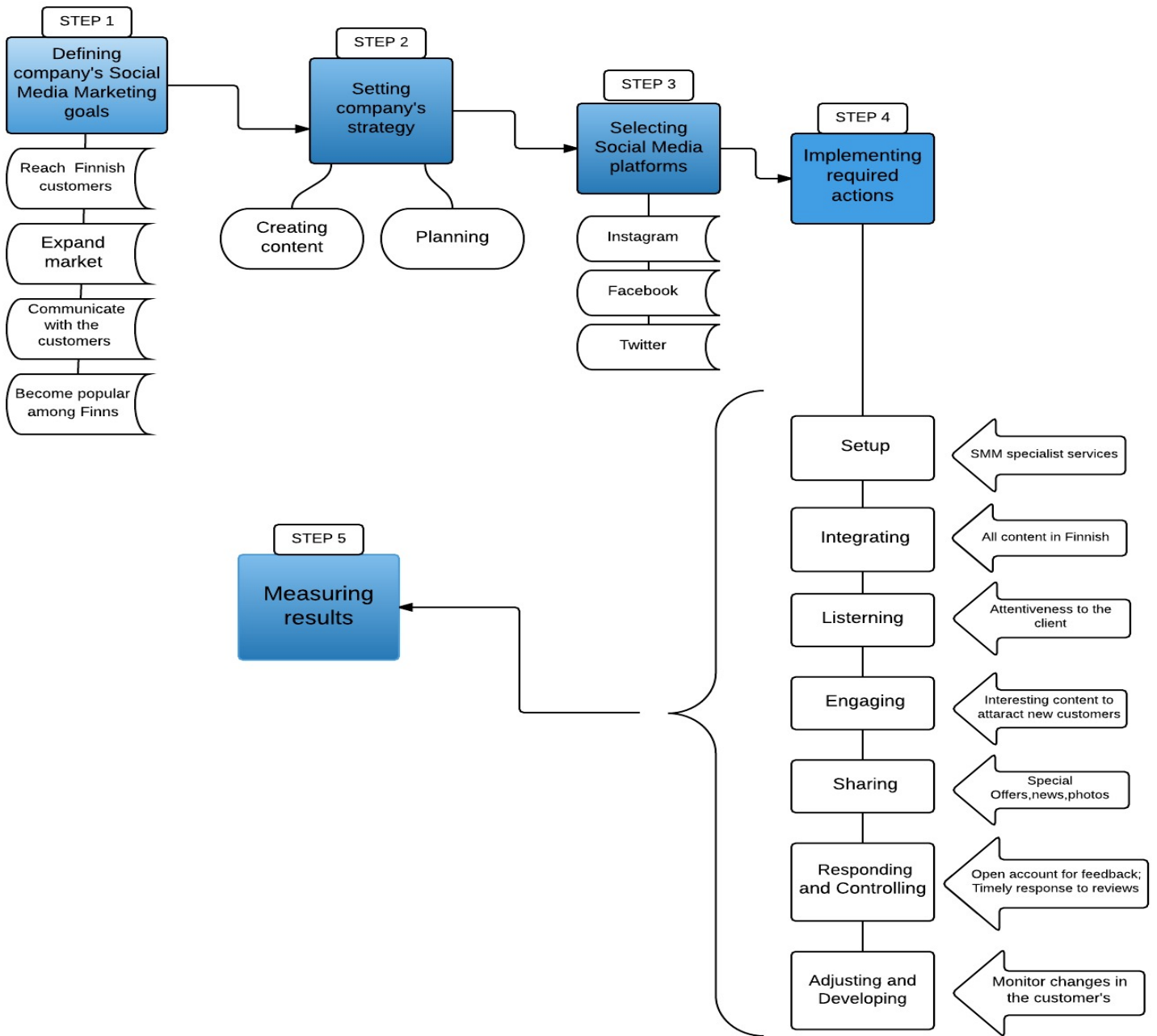


FIGURE 21. Social Media Marketing Development Plan.

The first step of the Development plan is **defining Social Media Marketing objectives**. As mentioned before in theoretical part, these goals should be SMART: S – specific, M – measurable, A – attainable, R – realistic, T – timely (Weinberg 2009). For Amani Dress company the main objectives are to expand the new market and reach Finnish customers. Moreover, they are planning to establish long-lasting relations and communication with Finnish customers and as a result, become popular in Finland.

The next step is **setting company's strategy**. According to the goals, Amani Dress should implement company's content delivery strategy. It is done in two parts by:

- Creating content where formulates the basic concept to attract and motivate customers.
- Planning where Amani Dress employees should calculate the costs and required time to achieve the goals. (Interview with Social Media Marketing specialist.)

The third step is **selecting Social media platforms**. When company's strategy is approved, now it is time to choose the most appropriate social media tools. Based on the statistic presented in the theoretical part (Ebrand Suomi Oy 2015), the most popular sites among Finnish youth are Instagram and Facebook. Moreover, according to the survey, the author ascertained that Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are the most frequently used social media sites when searching for new clothes.

That means that Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are the most suitable tools for Amani Dress. Due to the fact, that the chosen social media platforms are free to access, it will be the easy and inexpensive way to communication and promotion. Furthermore, based on the survey results Finnish women are using blogs when looking new clothes, so the company should cooperate with popular Finnish bloggers in order to promote their dresses.

The fourth step is to ***implement the required actions***. In order to set up the development Social Media Marketing plan it is necessary to realize following strategic actions. These actions are universal and can be performed sequentially or in the most appropriate manner for the case company.

***Setting Up.*** In order to achieve the main goal and reach Finnish customers, Amani Dress should create pages on social media platforms. Also, it would be a good idea to hire outside expert with extensive experience in required industry, who will set up pages in Finnish language.

***Integrating.*** The idea is to integrate their company with the customers. In this stage it is necessary to find a common language with the clients literally and figuratively. Amani Dress should adapt to a Finnish culture and moreover create all content in Finnish language. Due to the fact, that Amani Dress has already become popular among Russians it seems as not a big issue to reach the same success in Finland, due to the rich Social Media Marketing' experience.

***Listening.*** It is a continuous process, which required patient and attentiveness relation to the clients. Amani Dress workers should be ready not only to share information with the customers but to listen their opinions and suggestions. Easy adaptation to the customers' needs and wants is always an advantage to the company. Due to the fact, that Amani Dress' workers are professionals in their field they will easily establish strong connection with Finnish clients.

***Sharing.*** This step is an ongoing action, which will be necessary during all period of Social Media Marketing implementation. Amani Dress' Social Media specialists should constantly post news, photos, and special offers in order to inform customers about latest updating. According to the survey, Finnish women pay great attention to different blogs when looking for new clothes so it would be a good idea to cooperate with local bloggers, who in turn will post photos in the company's dresses.



**Engaging.** One of the main ideas of Social Media Marketing is to attract customers. That is why it is important to share not only information relating to the company's products but also interesting details, which can attract customers' attention such as *fashion news and fresh ideas for new looks*.

**Responding and Controlling.** The company's Social Media Marketing specialists should control all actions occurring on their pages in social networks and promptly respond to all customers' complaints and reviews. Besides that, Amani Dress should be ready to moderate an online conversation with the clients and answer all questions and suggestions as quick as possible in order to save good reputation as the negative feedback without timely responds affects company's image.

**Adjusting and Developing.** All the actions mentioned above are necessary to adjust, in order to provide sustainable cooperation with the clients. However, regulating is not enough. Due to the instability and variability of customers' preferences and desires, it becomes sophisticated to satisfy them. That is why developing is an essential process.

After all these actions that is time to move on to the fifth step – **Measuring the results**. This last but not least point is necessary to understand how efficiently Social Media Marketing is for the company. According to the theoretical part, it is important to identify KPI (Key Performance Indicators) in order to trace the progress of strategies in achieving goals. (Baker 2013.)

#### 4.3 Social Media Marketing Guidelines for Amani Dress

To implement the development plan that was presented above and efficient Social Media Marketing usage, the company should follow some guidelines. These suggestions are based on the theoretical data collected as well as on the empirical data collected, where both interviews and the survey among Finnish women were taken into account.

The table below presents guidelines, which should be followed in order to reach Finnish customers. After the proposed suggestions, the detailed description is presented.

Table 2. Guidelines for the Amani Dress company.

<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>Being active</b>	Daily updates to interest existing customers and attract new one
<b>Being sociable</b>	Correct and professional dialogue with the customers
<b>Being observant</b>	Polite and timely responses to reviews
<b>Being topical</b>	Adapt to customers' desires - cooperate with bloggers
<b>Being competitive</b>	Offer special discounts and gifts for reposts, feedback, photos of the dresses
<b>Being pertinent</b>	Balance of advertising and news, which are interesting to the clients

All suggestions for the case company Amani Dress are presented in Table 2. The company should not only create new accounts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter in Finnish language but become an active participant of these pages. The idea is to post daily news in order to remind customers about the Amani Dress' presence on the Finnish market and attract the interest. Everyday updates can consist of photos, special offers, reposts, useful information, and fashion news. Due to the fact, that the company has already achieved good results in Social Media Marketing in Russia, it will be easier to implement the similar actions, however with some features.

Also, the Amani Dress' Social Media Marketing specialists should be conversable with the clients. Being sociable is a necessary point to create strong relationships with the customers. Correct and professional dialogue with the clients will provide better understanding their needs and wants. Furthermore, according to the survey results, a lot of Finnish women prefer to read reviews about the products they are interested in and company's workers should control all reviews and answer on each of them. Moreover, Amani Dress' reputation depends on the feedback. That is why it is important to respond to feedback timely, politely and respectfully.

Being topical is also one of the suggestions, which should be taken into account when implementing Social Media Marketing. As everything in the world, customers' desires and preferences are changeable, that means that the company should be adaptable to new things. In Amani Dress case, it would be a good idea to cooperate with famous Finnish blogger to promote their dresses.

Moreover, the company should be competitive. Despite the fact, that there are a few competitors for Amani Dress in Finland, the company should try to be the most attractive one for the customers. Amani Dress should organize special offers to engage more and more clients. Also in order to

promote its' social media accounts, the company can offer different set of discounts and gifts for reposts, hashtags, and photos of Armani Dress' products, which were purchased by the customers. All these Social Media's activities will support Amani Dress success in the Finnish market.

The last but not least guideline is being relevant. This means that the company should strike a balance between posts promoting the company's products and news, which can be interested for the clients. This balance is important because usually the customers are tired of annoying advertising and really appreciate advises and support from the company. According to that, the company should post fashion news or different ideas for fashion looks.

To sum up, the development plan with SWOT analysis and some recommendations, based on both theoretical and empirical data collected, were presented to Amani Dress' owner and approved.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The chapter contains all information, which was gathered during the thesis research process. In additions, answers on the main research question as well as on the sub-questions will be presented. Finally, it contains the part about reliability and validity of the sources and recommendations for further researches.

### 5.1 Answers for Research Questions

The research focused on Social Media Marketing in general and on its efficient usage in particular. The main research question was following: *How can the case company Amani Dress improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract customers in Finland?* The answer to this question will be done at the end of this part, however firstly the author will reveal sub-questions.

#### ***What is social media?***

Social Media is a modern way of communication. Everyday the great number of people use social media platforms to share different content such as photos, videos, and news as well as to discuss topics of their interest. Due to the wide popularity of social media, it has become a part of marketing and, from this point of view, social media creates the dialogue between the company and the customer.

#### ***What is Social Media Marketing?***

Marketing is a promotional activity through social media sites in order to achieve different business goals such as increasing sales, expanding the market, reaching new customers, strengthening brand loyalty etc.

#### ***What opportunities and challenges do small businesses meet when using Social Media Marketing?***

When planning to use Social Media Marketing, the small business company should take into account that there are both advantages and disadvantages it could face with.

One of the main opportunities of using Social Media platforms is that the majority of them are free to access. Especially, this kind of marketing is actual for small businesses, which in contrast to large corporations do not have great financial resources. Also, Social Media Marketing is an easy and fast way to reach a big amount of people in short time. The company can not only promote their products but also communicate with the customers directly. That is a great possibility to know the clients' opinions about the products through reading feedback.

Moreover, Social Media Marketing can increase brand recognition, which as a result improve sales. And last but not least plus is that it nurtures brand loyalty and, according to different surveys, companies which have accounts on social media platforms get higher loyalty from the buyers.

However, there are still some disadvantages of using Social Media Marketing. The main reason is lack of experience and knowledge. Sometimes companies start their Social Media Marketing activities without a clear plan and efficient strategy. Because of that, small business owners can face with many newborn challenges and weaknesses in Social Media Marketing, due to the fact that it is a usually hard to administrate .

In addition, the company cannot control negative, which can lead to poor reputation and customers' distrust. Also, Social Media Marketing is about long and sometimes complicated process, which requires efforts and time investments.

***How does Social Media Marketing influence the Finnish target customer group?***

According to the survey results which disclosed in the empirical part, 95% of respondents (Finnish women), pay attention to the advertising on Social

Media platforms. Furthermore, 61 % answered that this advertising *affects them a lot*.

Furthermore, based on the survey results Finnish women prefer to subscribe the pages of different shops on social networking sites and follow the news and special offers. Due to wide popularity of Social Media Marketing and obvious customers' interest, it becomes a great possibility to reach new clients, in the particular case – Finnish people.

***How can the case company Amani Dress improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract customers in Finland?***

The idea of this thesis was to help Amani Dress to reach the Finnish market and attract Finnish customers through improving its Social Media Marketing strategy. During the thesis process, the author was collecting information to present Social Media Marketing Development Plan for the case company. Lately, the author showed the proposed Development Plan to the CEO of Amani Dress, who, in turn, approved it.

As a result, in order to improve their Social Media Marketing strategy, Amani Dress should follow next steps: Defining Social Media Marketing objectives, Setting company's strategy, Selecting social media platforms Implementing actions, and Measuring the results. However, to reach Finnish customers it is also important to follow the proposed guidelines: Being active, sociable, observant, topical, competitive, and pertinent.

To sum up, based on the analysis, the author suggests that the case company should focus on developing certain social media channels, which is the most popular among company's target group. In addition, Amani Dress company should be oriented to the Finnish market and create all content in Finnish language with updating news daily. The case company should also establish a dialogue with their Finnish customers and be ready to adapt to the ever-changing needs and desires of the clients. As a conclusion, the case company is recommended to move forward with the

Development Plan and suggestions in order to implement Social Media Marketing in Finland and attract Finnish customers.

TABLE 3. Answers to the Research Questions

<b><i>What is social media?</i></b>	Social media are Internet tools which allow people communicate online as well as share information, photos and videos.
<b><i>What is Social Media Marketing?</i></b>	Social Media Marketing is a promotional activity through social media sites in order to achieve different business goals such as increasing sales, expanding the market, reaching new customers, strengthening brand loyalty etc.
<b><i>What opportunities and challenges do small business meet when using Social Media Marketing?</i></b>	<u>Opportunities:</u> Free or cheap access, Easy and Fast way to reach a large number of people, Direct communication with the customer, Increase brand recognition, Nurtures brand loyalty. <u>Challenges:</u> Hard to administrate, Time consuming, Negative feedback.
<b><i>How does Social Media Marketing influence the Finnish target customer group?</i></b>	Social Media Marketing affects to Finnish target group a lot.
<b><i>How can the case company Amani Dress improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract customers in Finland?</i></b>	Amani Dress should follow the proposed Development Plan and suggestions in order to achieve the main goal. The case company should create an account on the most popular networking channels among company's target group (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), create all information in Finnish language, actively update news in order to interest customers, cooperate with local bloggers, establish the direct dialogue with the clients and continuously operate the pages.



Eventually, Social Media Marketing is one of the most valuable tools to reach customers. If the company starts to use Social Media Marketing with a clear strategy and ready to spend a big amount of time then it is a good possibility to establish a strong relationship with the clients and at the same time increase sales.

Despite the fact, that marketers often start their social media practice without a well-defined strategy and as a result it leads to a time wasting, Amani Dress company chose the reasonable way and asked to create the Social Media Marketing plan. In addition, the company analyzed the potential market and knew exactly who their clients are, what they want and what the competition is doing. For its part, the author took into account all these results and create their research according to social media strategy, and as a result, the Development Plan was presented.

## 5.2 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are factors, which should be confirmed at the end of the research. According to Blankenship (2010), reliability concerns the consistency of the information, which was collected during the study, while validity evaluates how appropriate the study design is to make the current conclusions for the chosen population (Trochim, Donnelly & Arora 2015).

The main purpose of the thesis was to answer the research question and sub-questions. In order to reach this aim and validate the hypothesis, the author gathered information from a wide range of reliable and credible secondary data sources. Moreover, the primary data was collected through the survey and two interviews. The first interview was with the CEO of Amani Dress company and the second one with the Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland. The survey was launched among Finnish women older than 16, so the results are appropriate for Amani Dress target group. The idea of the survey was to understand how Finnish

women use social media and to know their attitude to the online marketing. The number of respondents was 126, which makes the thesis reliable. According to these criteria, the study can be considered as valid and reliable.

### 5.3 Suggestions for further research

As mentioned in the beginning of the study, the thesis is strictly focused on reaching Finnish customers of Amani Dress. However, the research does not cover other nationalities. Moreover, a survey of a large number of respondents is highly recommended. A broader study of the Social Media Marketing in Finland would be useful and valuable for the case company.

## 6 SUMMARY

The main goal of the research was to answer how can the case company Amani Dress improve its Social Media Marketing strategy in order to attract customers in Finland? The final aim was to present the Social Media Development Plan with detailed explanation of actions.

At the beginning of the thesis the main Marketing as well as Social Media Marketing' concepts were introduced. Also, in order to better understand how to use Social Media Marketing efficiently, not only its opportunities but also challenges were investigated. Objectives, strategies, tactics and measurement of Social Media Marketing were disclosed to implement the development plan at the end of the research.

To answer the research questions the author also conducted an interview with the CEO of Amani Dress A. Amirdzhanyan, and with the Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland. The author wanted to find out how are Finns using social media as a part of their search for new clothes and for that reason, an empirical survey was conducted with the target group of the case company. The survey showed that a large number of Finnish women are using social networking sites to find new clothes and Social Media Marketing influences their decision.

The final part consists of the Social Media Marketing Development Plan for Amani Dress and guidelines were presented. The action plan was based on theoretical and empirical findings and was approved by the CEO of the case company. As a result, the trustworthy findings stated, that Social Media Marketing can be valuable and extremely meaningful for small businesses if it is used with appropriate knowledge and clear strategy. The case company should start its Social Media Marketing implementation from creating accounts on the most popular networking sites among Finns in Finnish language and follow the proposed Development Plan and guidelines to achieve success through reaching Finnish customers and expanding the market.

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## Interviews

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Survey

## Statistics

Social Media



## 1. How old are you?

- Under 16
- 17-25
- 26-35
- 36 and above

## 2. How many hours do you use Social Media per day?

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5 and above

## 3. Does advertisement on Social media channels catch your attention?

- No
- Yes

## 4. When searching for new clothes, do reviews, ratings and photos published on Social Media platforms affect your final decision?

- No affect at all
- Affects to some extent
- Affects a lot

## 5. Choose the most suitable option/s for you. More than one option can be selected.

- I subscribe to the pages, which promote clothes in Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ect.
- I'm interested in news, photos and special offers of shops which I subscribe.
- I read feedbacks about the product, which I'm interested in.
- I write feedback about the product I have already bought.
- Sometimes I searching some social media platforms to find new clothes.
- Other actions:
- None of them

## 6. Which social networking channels do you prefer when looking for new clothes? More than one option can be selected.

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Youtube
- I do not use Social Media for that
- Other, what?

Appendix 2. Interview with the CEO of Amani Dress A. Amirdzhanyan

1. Tell freely about the company ?
2. Who is the target customer of the company?
3. What is the main goal the company in Finland?
4. How the company use Social Media Marketing?
5. Which actions the company has already done in Finland?

Appendix 3. Interview with Social Media Marketing specialist in Finland

1. How popular Social Media Marketing in Finland is?
2. Which Social Media platforms are the most popular among Finns?
3. Which actions the company should implement to attract Finnish customers through Social Media?