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# Bachelor's Thesis

# A study of the potential contribution of social media in marketing Gassan Diamonds to tourists in Amsterdam.

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Signed........................

Ann-Christine Lindholm

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to all the participants of this research project who gave me the opportunity to complete this dissertation.

I would like to thank the Client Gassan Diamonds for allowing me to take part in this research and aiding in the process with support and information. Specifically I would like to thank Martine Willemsen of the Marketing and Sales department for acting as the client contact and offering advice and participating during the research process.

In addition, I would also like to thank my supervisor Nico Jansen for his suggestions, advice and encouragement throughout the writing and research process.

## List of Figures and Tables

## Executive Summary

This report is a study into the possible application of social media within the communication strategy of Gassan Diamonds, a diamond wholesaler and retailer located in Amsterdam in The Netherlands. Gassan Diamonds has yet to implement a social media strategy so a knowledge gap was identified as to how this could be done. The research consisted of studying the current uses and trends in social media and combining it with tourism trends related to Amsterdam to develop a social media strategy targeted at tourists in Amsterdam travelling outside of a tour group.

Social media refers to online media channels such as Facebook and Twitter that allow users to connect with each other and share various forms of content. Social media sites are increasingly being adopted by businesses for communication and marketing activities. The report discusses main user trends and introduces the main social media channels which are currently being used by businesses. These are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Foursquare and Linkedin. Social media can be divided into various categories based on their function and purpose with various social media sites targeting different user groups.

A situational analysis of Gassan Diamonds explores external trends and situations and looks at social media usage by Tourists coming to Amsterdam and by the company's main competitors. Gassan Diamonds competes directly with Coster Diamonds and Zazare diamonds but only Coster Diamonds is actively using social media. Globally many other jewellery firms are becoming increasingly active and creative with their social media usage such as Tiffany&co., Cartier and Mikimoto.

A survey conducted as primary research combined with secondary research concluded that a large proportion of tourists use social media and online sources for travel information. After analysing the developing trends, it is recommendable for companies to start using social media to target specific user groups in their communication strategies.

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Tourism in Amsterdam shows healthy signs of recovering after the recession with consumer spending and visitor numbers increasing. Global trends also indicate growth in luxury markets and an increase in demand for luxury products and diamond jewellery. These indicate favourable conditions for Gassan Diamonds.

The third section of the report uses the information presented in the report to develop a social media plan for Gassan Diamonds. The strategy has been divided into three levels based on the level of corporate commitment and resources needed to implement the plan. These have been categorized as Level I, Level II and Level III with Level III requiring the highest level of commitment.

The concluding recommendation of this report is for Gassan Diamonds to adopt a level II social media level of commitment and concentrate on actively using 3 social media platforms; Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. In addition to this it is recommended that Gassan Diamonds be involved in frequent monitoring of trends and updates online using monitoring tools and focus on building customer relationships through the online experience. The final objective would be to increase the number of independent tourist visitors to Gassan Diamonds outside of organized tour groups.

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## Explanation of Terms

**Check-in –** refers to measurement used to indicate where a user is located using  the FourSquare social media network

**Followers** – Term given to users subscribing to twitter streams

**Fans** – Term given to users following specific Facebook pages usually referring to specific

people, brands or  products

**Geo-location service** – type of social media that allows users to post their location using

mobile devices

**Likes** – Term given to users supporting a subject on Facebook, indicating approval through

the click of a tab

**Status Update** – name given to text updates posted on social media sites, usually brief text

**Screenshot** - image taken of the computer monitor to record items on display

**Social Media**-   "group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and

technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-

generated content.[1]"

**Social Network** – "a website where one connects with those sharing personal or

 professional interests, place of origin, education at a particular school, etc.[2]"

**Tweets** - Form of messages posted to twitter, limited to 140 characters.

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[1]Haenlain, Michael & Kaplan, Andreas http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B6W45-4XFF2S0-1/2/600db1bd6e0c9903c744aaf34b0b12e1 Date Accessed: 15.5.2011
[2] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/social+network Date Accessed: 15.5.2011

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## 1.0 Introduction

In communication strategies the term media is used to describe the means of communicating a message. Traditionally this has been through newspapers, television, magazines and so on. More recently the internet has taken a more prominent role in communication and now a new media has emerged online known as social media.

Social media is a new tool that emerged from advances in internet technology. Social media allows people to connect online over social media platforms and share information in various forms such as pictures, videos and text.

The growing popularity of social media and its involvement in many parts of modern life are part of the motivation for starting this research project. Many websites now link to twitter feeds, Facebook pages, LinkedIn profiles etc. It is clear that this sort of media is having an effect on the world and needs more study in its application. A social media strategy implements tactics utilizing various social media channels in a coordinated way to support the overall marketing communications strategy.

One of the information gaps within this research area is how to incorporate social media into overall corporate strategy since the subject has only recently emerged as a new opportunity for businesses to use.

Businesses have chosen to take many different approaches in an attempt to manage and utilize social media and internet marketing in a way that grabs the consumer's attention and provides measurable benefits to the business. For this research project the problem is how to implement a social media plan that will aid in Gassan Diamonds objective of attracting more tourists to their diamond factory

## 2.0 Research Problem

This paper studies social media and its potential contribution to a marketing communication plan through a case study using Gassan Diamonds as the acting client.

Social media is a new phenomenon that has recently gained importance because of exponential growth of the number of users worldwide. Since social media sites are a relatively new form of technology their full potential has yet to be determined. The potential social media has to reach millions of people and the technological capabilities to allow businesses to connect with customers in new ways makes it an important area of study that requires more research into its effectiveness as a communication channel.

Since the technology and the concept of social media is relatively new and only recently begun to be considered as a serious business tool there is not enough existing research into the topic of what methods of application are most successful. Due to the rapidly changing environment of the internet and technological advancements, research that has been done on the subject is quickly out of date or as of yet inconclusive.

The objective of this research paper is to outline an effective social media plan for a client and demonstrate its place in a marketing communication strategy. The social media plan should support the main business objectives and communicate the company's values. The social media plan will be developed based on a traditional communication plan structure since in this case it will be considered an element of the marketing communication plan.

## 3.0 Literature Review & Methodology

To reach the objectives of developing a social media plan for the client, research has been done into technology trends, social media trends, consumer behaviour and relevant industry trends. Various sources have been used including online sources and relevant text books and journals.

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The following literature review has divided discussion of sources into the type of literature used; text books and the various online sources which then discuss the main themes and critical views of the sources.

Text books have been used as sources to supply theory related to marketing and communications, these include using more traditional sources such as Kotler's Marketing text books and text books related specifically to marketing communications and strategy building such as Donald Parente's Guide to Marketing Communication Plans. The text books used have mainly been student resources with descriptive information and case studies that have been relevant to this research project. However the information in these text books is out of date and they do not have any information or theory related to the use of social media. Due to limitations related to text book resources and availability, more up-to-date text books dealing with social media and published in the last year were unavailable. For this reason, the internet has been the main source for more up-to-date information and has been used to find information and statistics related to this specific study in addition to traditional marketing theory books.

Text books such as those by David Chaffey and Alan Tapp focus on the overall subject of digital marketing or internet marketing which is a much broader subject than that of social media. These sources have only recently been updated with information related to the existence of social media in brief chapter overviews. This is the case with many text book sources. The concept of connecting with customers over the internet is only expanded when discussing social media but the theories have been covered using other online channels.

Online sources that have been used are blogs, online articles and news sources, journals, company web pages, reports made available by consultant companies and research firms and social media posts. Most of the sources discussing social media specifically and internet marketing have been based online in blogs and articles written by various individuals.

Using online sources it is important to read them critically as many posts such as blogs represent opinions which may not have been thoroughly researched or are ambiguous about their sources of information.

The common theme that has been present in online sources is the discussion of how to use Social media. This is a new topic within business communications and it is evident that many communication 'Gurus' have different opinions on what works best. The consensus of opinion that has appeared is that it is no longer an issue of whether a company should have an online social media strategy but how is it going to implement one. However, this is the general opinion found online which suggests that the individuals voicing these opinions are already relatively comfortable using online and technological resources in business. Key figures in this research area include Dave Chaffey and Seth Godin who are active members of online communities and both use social media to promote their own efforts. These sources emphasize the importance of relationship building and customer focus in relation to using social media.

It is evident that many companies are struggling with the concept of social media and how to integrate it into a strategy. Online sources have an underlying theme of tutorials and explaining how to use specific social media channels and offer advice and examples on how to set up a social media strategy. There are also increased levels of studies and research papers available that specifically look at social media user trends and more that are specifically being aimed at business applications of social media.

All sources found online citing statistics have been looked at critically since depending on the framework and specifications of the study, results have been different. Many sources cite completely different figures meaning exact numbers are not consistent. Sources that support each other or contradict each other can be used to indicate general trends.

Information relating to tourism and industry trends has been found using official sources such as the Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions which publishes official statistics and information online.

The information that has been gathered from all these sources has been used to develop the recommendations for a social media plan for Gassan Diamonds. Text books have been used as the basis for marketing and communications theory which provided the framework to build on for developing a structured communication plan using social media. Online sources such as blogs and articles have been predominantly used to discover trends and patterns of how social media is currently being used and what the possibilities are. Reports and official statistics on social media and tourism have been used to understand consumer behaviour and how social media is being used by consumers to decide on what can be done with social media to implement it effectively.

Primary research was carried out in the form of a survey through face-to-face interviews with tourists located in Amsterdam. The methodology was based on the 5$^{th}$ Edition of the Marketing Research textbook.

## 4.0 Client Company profile

The client for this case is the company Gassan Diamonds, a Dutch diamond merchant and jeweler in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Gassan Diamonds is a private family owned company which was founded in 1945 by Samuel Gassan. Currently the company is run by Benno and Guy Leeser, the grandsons of Samuel Gassan and employs 500 people who work at Gassans offices around the world.

The company still focuses on diamond cutting, wholesaling and retailing in individual and set diamonds, diamond and gold jewellery and watches[3]. The company offers free tours in multiple languages at their diamond factory located in the centre of Amsterdam allowing for the opportunity to make a purchase after the tour.

Figure 1 Gassan Diamonds logo

**GASSAN**
*d i a m o n d s*

Source: http://www.gassandiamonds.nl/

The factory attracts nearly 400,000 visitors a year from around the world. In addition to the diamond factory, Gassan Diamonds runs Gassan Dam Square, three other diamond shops, seven watch and jewellery shops also several duty free stores at global airports such as Changi airport in Singapore all under the Gassan Group name. They also operate after-sale offices in Bangkok and Hong Kong[4].

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[3] http://www.gassandiamonds.com/index_testtaal.asp?n=1&t=1&s=7&l=1 11.4.2011
[4] http://www.gassandiamonds.nl/en/information.html Date Accessed:11.4.2011

## 5.0 Social Media

## 5.1 What is social media?

The way in which technology is used and the effect it has had on communication between businesses and consumers is the most significant change that has developed over the last decade. Marketing is no longer a one way stream of communication with businesses and corporations beaming information to the consumer, in many ways it has become a two way street where businesses must build up a relationship and listen to the consumer in order to maintain interest. Alan Tapp, author of 'Principles of Direct and Database Marketing - A Digital Orientation,' puts it as the internet being a 'many-to-many' medium, meaning information travels in all directions[5].

The way companies interact with customers has changed and evolved from traditional one-way communication methods to active interaction and dialogue. One of the latest developments in technology has been the rise of so called social media networks.

Social media has been defined as a technological development that allows for the sharing of user generated content over the internet. Social media networks act as a promotional channel for content distribution and can be used for research, feedback and building relationships.

In business social media can also be used for customer service purposes, product or service feedback, industry networking, promotions and contests, news and company updates and also collaboration.

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[5] "Principles of Direct and Database Marketing" Alan Tapp p.56

According to Antony Mayfield, Vice President of global digital marketing company iCrossing, there are currently six basic kinds of social media: Social networks, Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, Forums and Content communities[6]. The largest social networks looking at the number of registered user accounts currently include sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube and MySpace[7].

Another characteristic of social media is the creation of communities and networks which allow for relationships to be built up quickly between users and encourages sharing of information and communication. This same feature can help businesses build relationships with their target groups through direct communication and interaction on social media networks.

Each social media channel has been developed for different purposes targeting different user group for example some social networks have been developed around common interests such as food or travelling. Others for specific purposes such as sharing pictures and videos or networks based on geographic location. It is also important to consider that the popularity of certain networks changes from region to region.

*See Appendix I for descriptions of the social media channels discussed in this report.*

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[6] http://www.icrossing.co.uk/fileadmin/uploads/eBooks/What_is_Social_Media_iCrossing_ebook.pdf  Date Accessed  20.4.2011

[7] http://ignitesma.s3.amazonaws.com/ignitewebsite/social-network-analysis-2010/2010-social-network-analysis-report.pdf Date Accessed: 15.5.2011

## 5.2 Social Media Trends

Social media is undergoing constant change including how users interact with the media and what user expectations are from these channels. Users want engagement from social media and the freedom of information and interaction is part of what has made social media so successful.

Research done by media consultants such as marketing professional Brian Rice have determined that the types of content that promotes the most engagement from users is content that helps to solve problems or answer questions, 3rd party validation that highlights the other peoples success and content that provides commentary on current events or gives a unique perspective[8]. Users are looking for content with value and information that relates to them or their interests. The main reasons for users joining pages offered by businesses such as brand pages are to find discounts, get news on products or because they are already familiar with the product, to give companies ideas on how to improve products or to complain[9].

Users can interact and engage in various ways on social networks. Businesses need to look at these methods and understand what needs to be developed when planning a social media strategy and focus on ways to get users involved which in turn will lead to measurable results for the company. Users can interact and engage with content by indicating approval of a post by 'liking' a post or topic (in other words, clicking on a link related to the post which then records the individuals approval through an icon and connects their name with the post.) 'Likes' on Facebook and similar tools on various networks represent many important factors for a company. It can be considered as permission given by the consumer to receive more information.

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[8] *http://www.business2community.com/social-media/10-questions-about-the-current-state-and-future-of-social-media-and-digital-marketing-024643* Date Accessed 12.5.2011
[9] http://mashable.com/2010/09/28/brand-trends-on-facebook/ Date Accessed 18.5.2011

Through 'Likes,' companies can target social media communication at specific users who are interested in the brand since they have already shown an interest by interacting with the profile page of the company. 'Likes' can also be used to track what information and updates have the most impact on users. These sorts of indicators should be studied to determine which areas of the social media communication plan are working and which need to be revised.

According to Mikolaj Jan Piskorski from Harvard Business School, Social media usage also indicates that users on social networks respond the most to pictures with users spending most of their time on social networks viewing images[10]. In relation to how users view social media and businesses, users will be more inclined to engage with pages related to entertainment artists and media organizations such as MTV as indicated by the number of like posts on these pages[11].

It is important to understand the nature of social networks and what happens to content that is posted. As with many sources of information on the internet, interest in social media posts is short lived. According to research done by online research company Visibli, 50% of 'likes' on Facebook posts are done within the first hour and 20min of the post and 80% within the first 7 hours. Once the next status is posted the previous post is easily lost[12]. These figures give an indication of how often businesses should engage in social media activities. Posts are quickly forgotten or hidden between other messages so it is important to maintain a level of social interaction to maximize efficiency. However this does not mean that new content should be added on an hourly basis either. Future posts should be spaced so that the effectiveness of previous messages is maximized by allowing time for user engagement. Through the same study trends indicate that users are much more open to

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[10] http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/6156.html Date Accessed: 18.5.2011
[11] http://visibli.com/reports/fbstudy Date Accessed 29.4.2011
[12] http://visibli.com/reports/fbstudy Date Accessed  29.4.2011

conversation with brand pages and post more comments in comparison to media organizations or celebrity artist pages.

Many new trends are emerging with the ways in which businesses and marketers are utilizing social media within their communication strategies. Growing numbers indicate that social media is becoming an important tool for their business and many are keen to learn more about how to use various social media tools. A significant trend is the rise in video marketing, based on the social media marketing industry report for 2011, 77% of marketers participating in the study planned on increasing their use of Youtube and video marketing[13].

The main motivation for businesses to implement a social media plan is the idea that social media is a new opportunity for businesses to communicate with the customer which will bring with it many benefits. According to the Social Media marketing industry report for 2011, business usage of social media indicates that marketers have seen many benefits of using social media and have listed them as the following; social media generated exposure for the business, increased traffic and subscribers, improved search rankings, resulted in new business partnerships, generated qualified leads, reduced overall marketing expenses and improved sales. These benefits may not be applicable to all sorts of businesses.

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[13] "Social Media Marketing Industry Report 2011" http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/social-media-marketing-industry-report-2011/ Date Accessed 10.4.2011

Figure 2 Commonly used social media tools
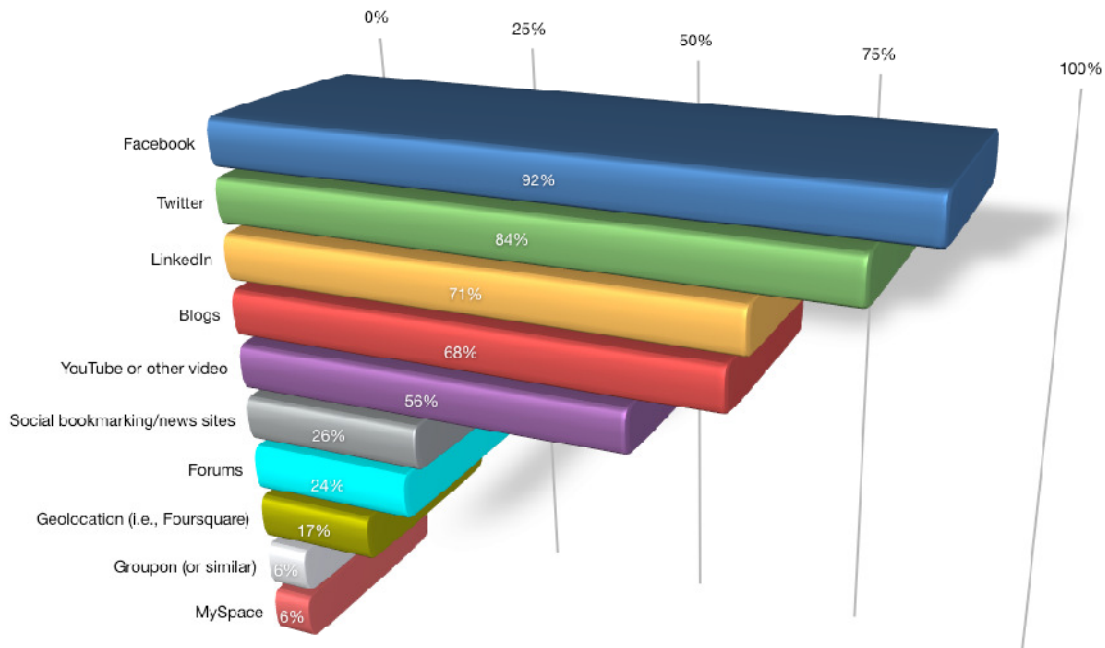


Source: 2011 Social Media Marketing Industry report p.21

Figure 2 illustrates the main tools marketers are now using for their social media strategies. Facebook is clearly the dominant channel that is being used by most marketers for business purposes with 92% of respondents reporting they have an official Facebook account. The tool is easy to use and has the largest audience compared to other social media networks. Facebook is a versatile tool that allows marketers to interact with users along with posting a variety of content such as pictures, videos, status posts and news information. This is one reason why Facebook is the main media channel chosen by businesses that are just starting with their social media usage. The large user base translates into better reach and the tools within the system allow the message to be more easily targeted at specific segments at lower costs which may aid in achieving objectives.

The chart also shows an increased adoption rate of new tools such as Geo-location services, this type of service is more likely to be used by larger businesses.

This figure may grow in the next few years as technology improves and the services are adapted to interact with more media channels and various forms of technology such as mobile devices and smart phones.

The research was done by Michael A. Steltzner, founder of the online business magazine Social Media Examiner which is dedicated to social media. The site is ranked as one of the top 100 business blogs in the world[14]. The survey was specifically targeted at marketers and participants were found through social media and email with all together 3342 individuals participating and was conducted in January 2011 over a period of 10 days. The survey is indicative of social media trends however participants were mainly located in the USA meaning the responses may not reflect global trends. Also the largest portion of respondents were self-employed and from smaller companies meaning the effects of social media may be perceived differently when compared to being used by larger companies[15].

## 5.3 Social Media Consumers

The usage of social media has exploded in the last few years from an exclusive service used by a few to being a common part of daily life. Social networks are now predominantly used to share interests and parts of user's lives with each other. Individuals use social networks differently for example there is a clear difference in behaviour between men and women and different age groups. There is also a difference in demographics between who uses what network and how they use them.

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[14] http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/about/ Date Accessed 18.4.2011
[15] 2011 Social Media Marketing Industry report p.39 Date Accessed 15.5.2011

Research done at Harvard Business School shows that 70% of all Social network activities are related to viewing photos. When looking at posts and social network updates, women are more likely to make posts and create content while men give references to other information[16].

Different networks are used for different purposes and are aimed at difference user groups. LinkedIn was specifically aimed at professionals and network building so it is known as a niche social network, on the other hand Facebook has expanded to the point where the goal is to attract as many users as possible. Twitter is specifically a text based service where posts have to fit into 140 character messages. This service is used to post links and short news updates along with other messages.

## 5.4 Demographics of Key social networks

When deciding on a social media plan it is important to understand who is using what networks and what the networks are used for. For reach Facebook has the largest user base with 500 million active users around the world[17]. Looking at the user demographics, the social media channels with the most affluent and educated user groups above the age of 20 are Facebook, Linkedin, Foursquare and Flickr. Affluent is regarded as users earning more than 24,999$ per year. In this case it should be noted that since Facebook has by far the largest user base it will include more users in all demographic segments[18].

For any communication plan it is vital to choose the correct communication channels to be able to transmit the intended message effectively to the targeted group. Effectively means the communication reaches the intended target and results in action taken by the consumer.

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[16] "Understanding users of social networks" Harvard Business School, Sean Silverthorne
http://hbswk.hbs.edu/pdf/item/6156.pdf Date Accessed 18.5.2011
[17] http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics Date Accessed 28.4.2011
[18] http://ignitesma.s3.amazonaws.com/ignitewebsite/social-network-analysis-2010/2010-social-network-analysis-report.pdf Date Accessed 15.5.2011

Social media is no different, there are a myriad of social media channels with more constantly being developed making it a challenge for marketers to decide which social media platforms are the most effective to reach specifically targeted segments.

## 6.0 Social Media Communication Plan

Social media is rapidly becoming a standard part of the marketing communication plan with growing numbers of business people reporting that social media is a part of their regular marketing communication strategy[19]. However since many use social media differently, there is no traditional or expected structure for a social media plan. Below is a recommendation on how social media should be integrated as a part of the communication structure. The traditional communication structure is based on an outline for a marketing communication plan taken from "Advertising campaign strategy: A Guide to marketing communications plans" by Donald Parente with changes made to include social media[20]:

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[19] social media marketing industry report 2011 p.11 Date Accessed 15.5.2011
[20] "Advertising campaign strategy: A Guide to Marketing Communications Plans" Donald Parente p.21

**Figure 3: Marketing Communication Plan Outline**

I.      Introduction
II.     Situation Analysis
        a.   company analysis
        b.   Consumer Analysis
        c.   Market Analysis
        d.   Product Analysis
        e.   Competitive Analysis
III.    The Target Market profile
IV.     Objectives
        a.   Marketing
        b.   Communication
        c.   Advertising
V.      Marketing Communication strategy
        a.   Advertising strategy
                        1.   Creative or message strategy
                                a.   Objectives
                                b.   Strategy
                                c.   Tactics
                        2.   Media Strategy
                                a.   Objectives
                                b.   Strategy
                                c.   Tactics
                                d.   Cost estimates
                                e.   Continuity Schedule
        b.   Sales Promotion
                        1.   Objectives
                        2.   Strategy
                        3.   Tactics
        c.   Public Relations
                        1.   Objectives
                        2.   Strategy
                        3.   Tactics
        d.   Direct Marketing
                        1.   Objectives
                        2.   Strategy
                        3.   Tactics
        e.   Event Marketing/Infomercials
                        1.   Objectives
                        2.   Strategy
                        3.   Tactics
        f.   Social Media
                        1.   Objectives
                        2.   Strategy
                        3.   Tactics
VI.     Communication Assessment Measures
VII.    Budget
VIII.   Summary

The outline shows where social media's place is within the communication strategy. In this situation, it is most efficient to consider social media alongside sales promotion, advertising and other communication operations to ensure a common message and theme throughout the communication strategy.

## 6.1 Situation Analysis

### 6.1.1 Company Analysis

Gassan Diamonds is a company with an established brand name that has a long history of operating in the diamond industry. The company is located in a central location in Amsterdam which is convenient for tourist visits and has a broad selection of quality products.

### 6.1.2 Current Online Situation

Gassan Diamonds currently has a basic social media plan but one which still needs development. They have recently started an initiative to further expand their online presence. At the start of this research project Gassan Diamonds was already present on several social network channels with limited activity.

Gassan Diamonds has accounts on the following social networks: Youtube, Facebook, Foursquare, Flickr, Traveladvisor. So far these social networks do not contain much content and do not come up in google searches done using the key words Gassan Diamonds, Amsterdam diamonds or Amsterdam diamond factory. There is very limited activity on these social media profiles and little user interaction. For instance the Youtube channel of Gassan Diamonds, also known as 'gassandiamonds,' has to date had 29 channel visits, 336 views of the channel. After 1 year of activity the only content available is one promotional video[21].

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[21] http://www.youtube.com/user/gassandiamonds Date Accessed  6.5.2011

The key pieces of information missing on Gassan Diamond's current profiles are the company's description, contact information and links to the corporate web pages. There is no continuity or connection between the profiles or to the official brand name.

Figure 4: Gassan Diamonds Youtube Profile
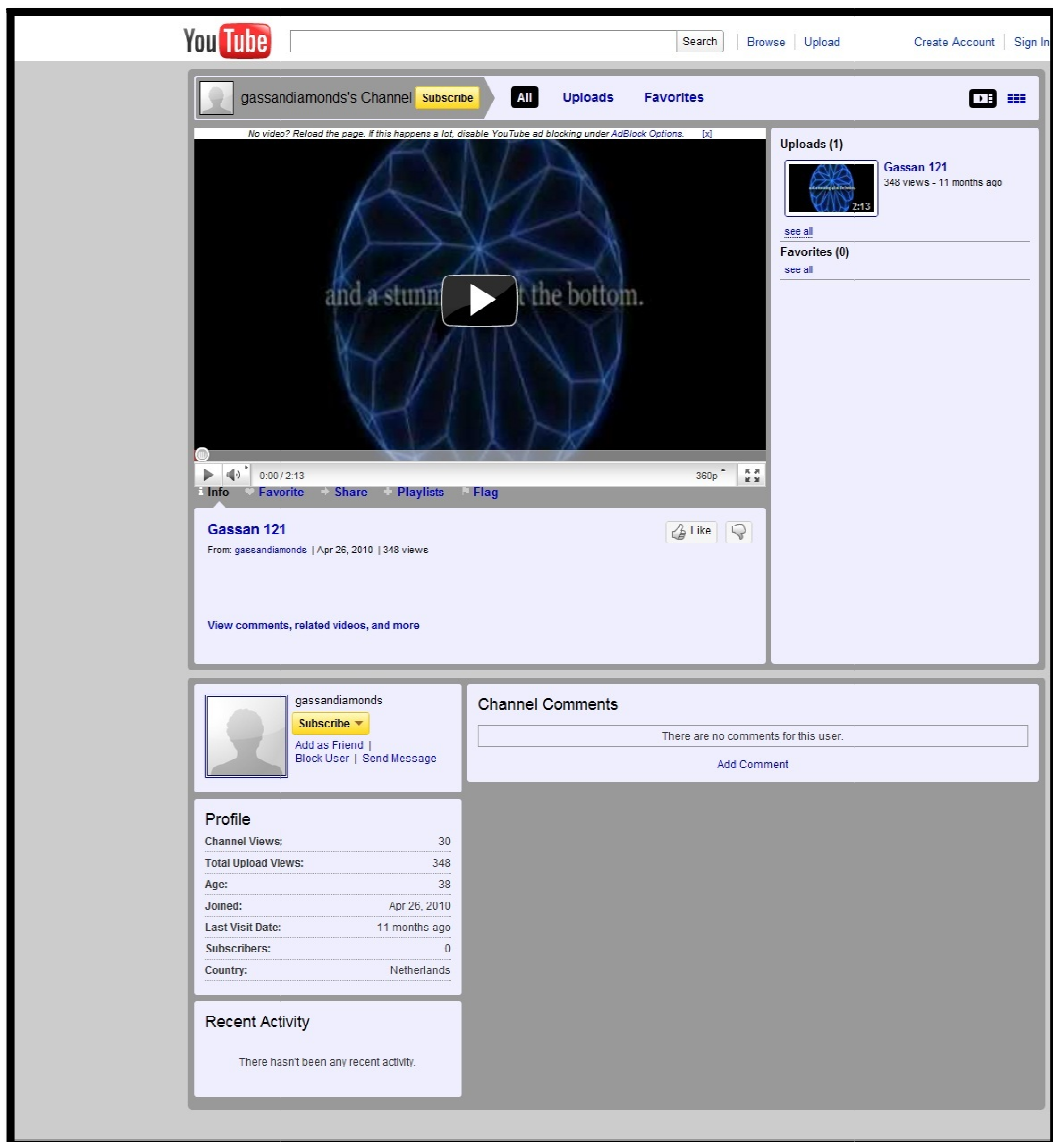


source: www.youtube.com/gassandiamonds Date Accessed 1.5.2011

Figure 4 shows a screen capture of the Gassan Diamonds Youtube channel profile as of May 2011. The profile has one uploaded video with no other information.

In this instance it is clear that there is not much user engagement and no clear message from the company, the profile is visibly still in the development phase. The profile is acting as a skeleton placeholder providing the user with no incentives to learn more about the company or the product.

Figure 5: Gassan Facebook Profile
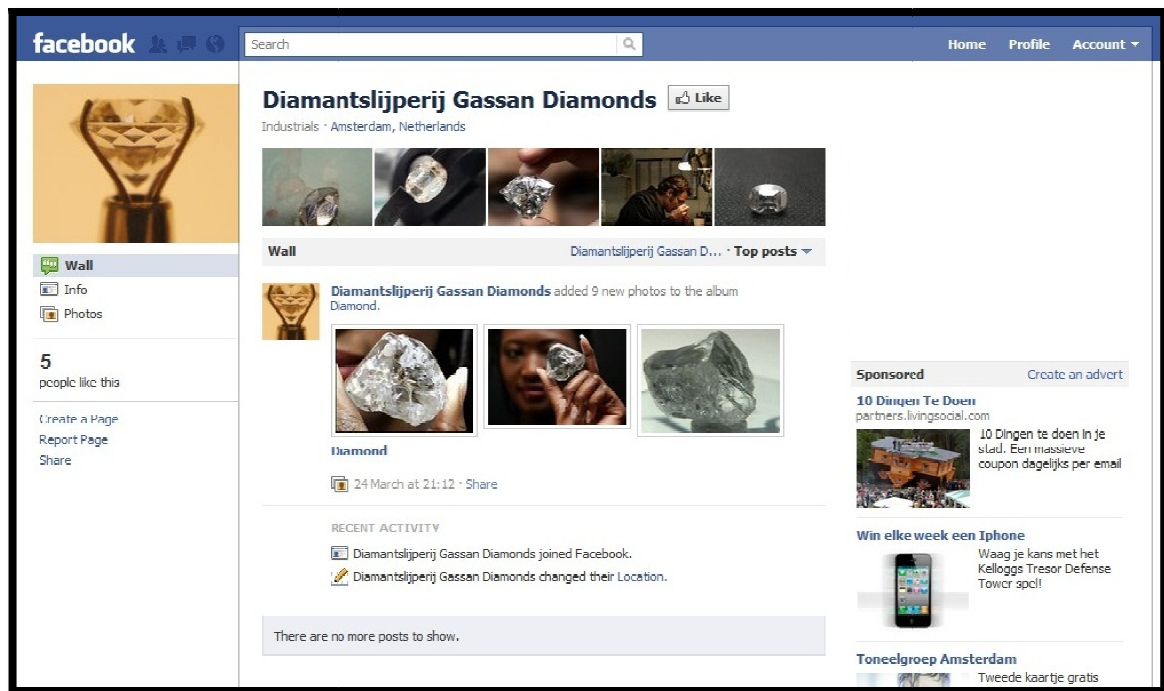


source: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Diamantslijperij-Gassan-Diamonds/211264158883604 Date Accessed 1.5.2011

The screenshot above is from a Gassan Diamonds Facebook page, it is one result out of 3 that came up when searching for Gassan Diamonds on Facebook. This profile is also clearly in the development phase. There is more content in the Facebook profile in comparison to the Youtube channel however there is no user engagement which is apparent by the lack of user comments or content. The site offers the bare minimum with a few pictures.

Using the search option in Facebook to look for Gassan diamonds official page resulted in several search results, none of which were clear to be the official pages. This indicates that profile has not been completed yet and will not be visible in search results of users looking for diamond factories in Amsterdam.

There are a few reviews present online related to Gassan Diamonds on both Google maps pages and other social networks. These range from poor reviews to moderately positive[22].

The objectives of the social media plan should be to increase the number of positive user reviews that are found online by encouraging users to visit the profile pages and creating a positive online customer experience emphasizing Gassan Diamond's expertise and customer service capabilities.

## 6.1.3 Consumer Analysis

For this social media plan, several factors needed to be considered in choosing the social media platforms. These were the target groups age, income, location and language. The targeted group would be between the ages of 30 to 50 and in an income group that would be able to purchase luxury products. The social media platforms should also be ones that are available on a global scale and not limited to a few select locations. For the social media plan it would be most cost effective to use a global approach and use social media platforms with an already established broad user network. Some niche networks such as Hyves.nl are more popular in certain areas but targeting Niche networks at the beginning phase of a social media plan would require too many resources. For this reason platforms such as Facebook with larger user bases are recommended.

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[22] http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Europe/Netherlands/Provincie_Noord_Holland/Amsterdam-463377/Things_To_Do-Amsterdam-Diamonds-BR-2.html Date Accessed 10.5.2011

To gain some insight into the consumer sand their usage of social media in relation to travel, a survey was carried out with the objective of getting a general idea of any social media trends. A total of 33 people were interviewed for this survey over a period of 2 days. The subjects were chosen at random in tourist locations from tourist groups who were waiting to join a tour. Three tour companies were used; Sandemans New Europe Free walking tour, the Canal cruise tour and the City Bus tour all located in the city centre.

Due to the small number of respondents the survey cannot be considered as being definitive but findings do support other research that has been found. See appendix III for the full results of the survey.

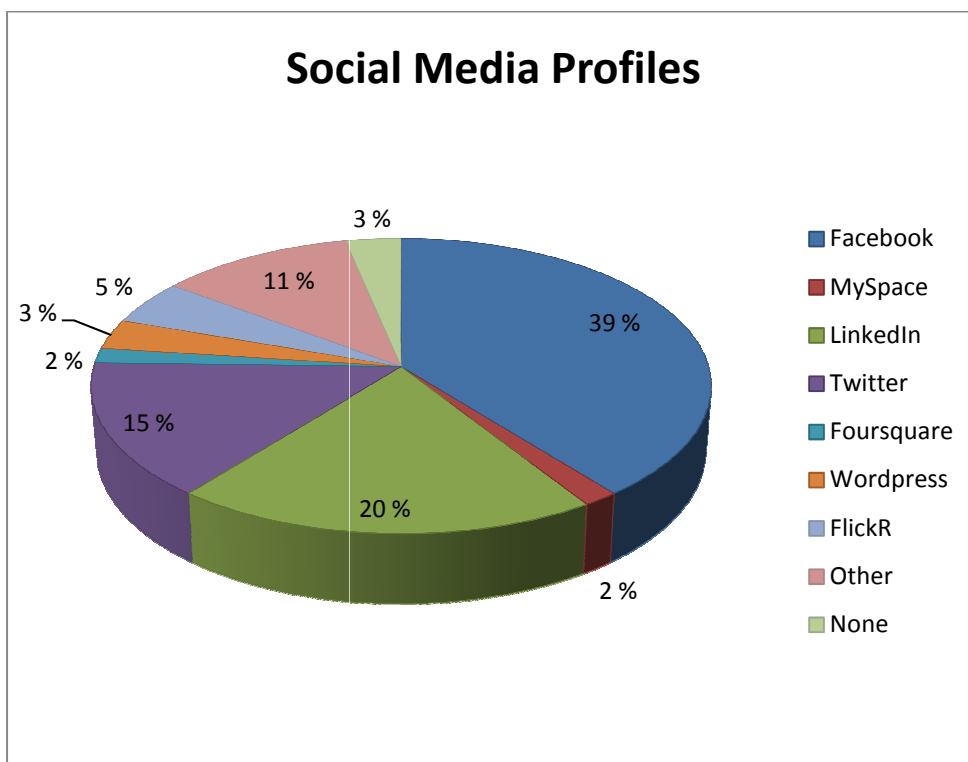Figure 6: Social Media use by tourists in Amsterdam



Figure 6 demonstrates the social media usage of tourists coming to Amsterdam which is similar to worldwide social media user trends. Facebook is clearly the dominant social media platform, followed closely by LinkedIn and Twitter.

Only two of the respondents had no social media profiles while the majority had profiles on several platforms. Respondents who used Niche social media networks, such as Tripadvisor (http://www.tripadvisor.com/), which are aimed at travellers reported to using social networks more when looking for information on where to go when travelling. However 64% reported to not using social networks at all when looking for travel advice.

Figure 7: Sources of tourist tour information
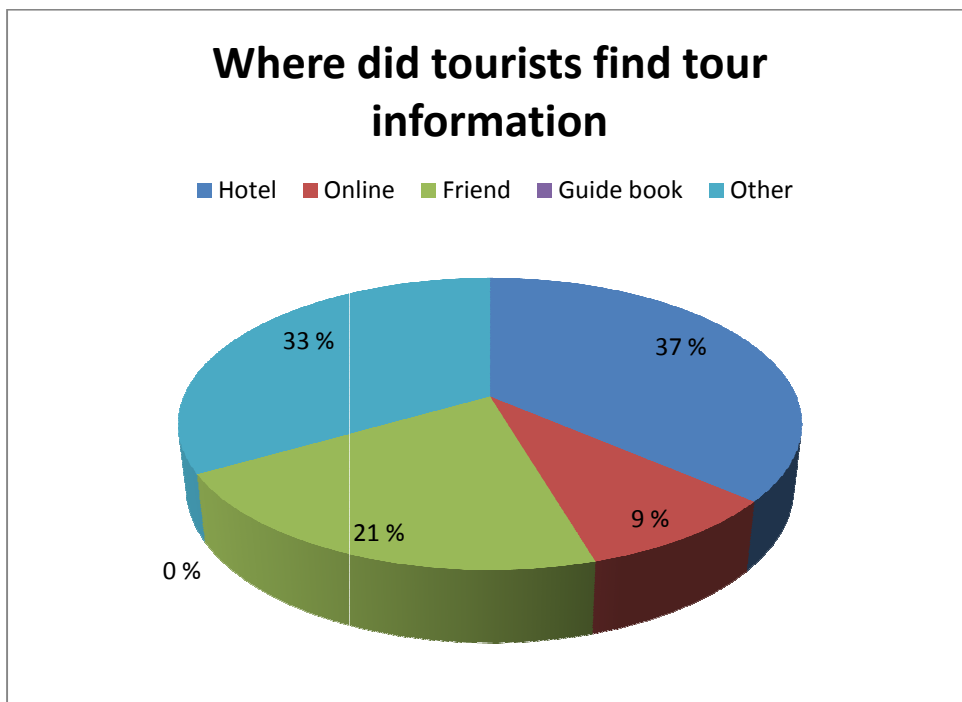


Some interesting results of the survey were indications of where tourists find out about the tours that they visit while on vacation, responses shown in Figure 7. The strongest influence was from tourists' hotels, either being informed by hotel staff or finding pamphlets and fliers advertising the tour. The next largest group heard about tours either by taking similar tours in different countries or through discount coupons and some just happened to see or pass the tour area. These answers all fall under the 'Other' category.

Based on a research report completed in 2011 by the Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions, it is possible to see further trends related to social media use by tourists in the Netherlands[23].

According to the report the internet is one of the most important sources of information for tourists looking for travel information. Foreign tourists mainly use review sites when looking for travel advice before going on vacation. American tourists are especially active on social media sites and are also more likely to go to review sites and blogs. Close to 70% of travellers are reportedly a part of some social network and many are affected by 'word of mouth' marketing, in other words they are influenced by comments made by other users on social networks. 65% of these vacation goers have used social media either actively or passively before, during and after their trip. Most activity is done after a trip where users post messages about their vacation or upload photos.

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[23] http://www.nbtc.nl/corporate/nl/innovatielab/rapport-innovatielab/ Date Accessed 18.5.2011

Figure 8:



**Consulted information sources before visiting Holland 2005-2009**

| Source | 2009 | 2005 |
|---|---|---|
| Internet | 82% | 69% |
| Travel books | 21% | 19% |
| Family/friend/relatives | 27% | 18% |
| Brochures/flyers | 14% | 16% |
| Travel agent/touroperator | 14% | 11% |
| Article in magazine/newspaper | 10% | 6% |
| Ads in magazine/newspaper | 4% | nb |
| Travel programms | 6% | nb |
| Radio/tv | 1% | 2% |
| Other | 8% | 6% |
| No information consulted | 11% | 25% |

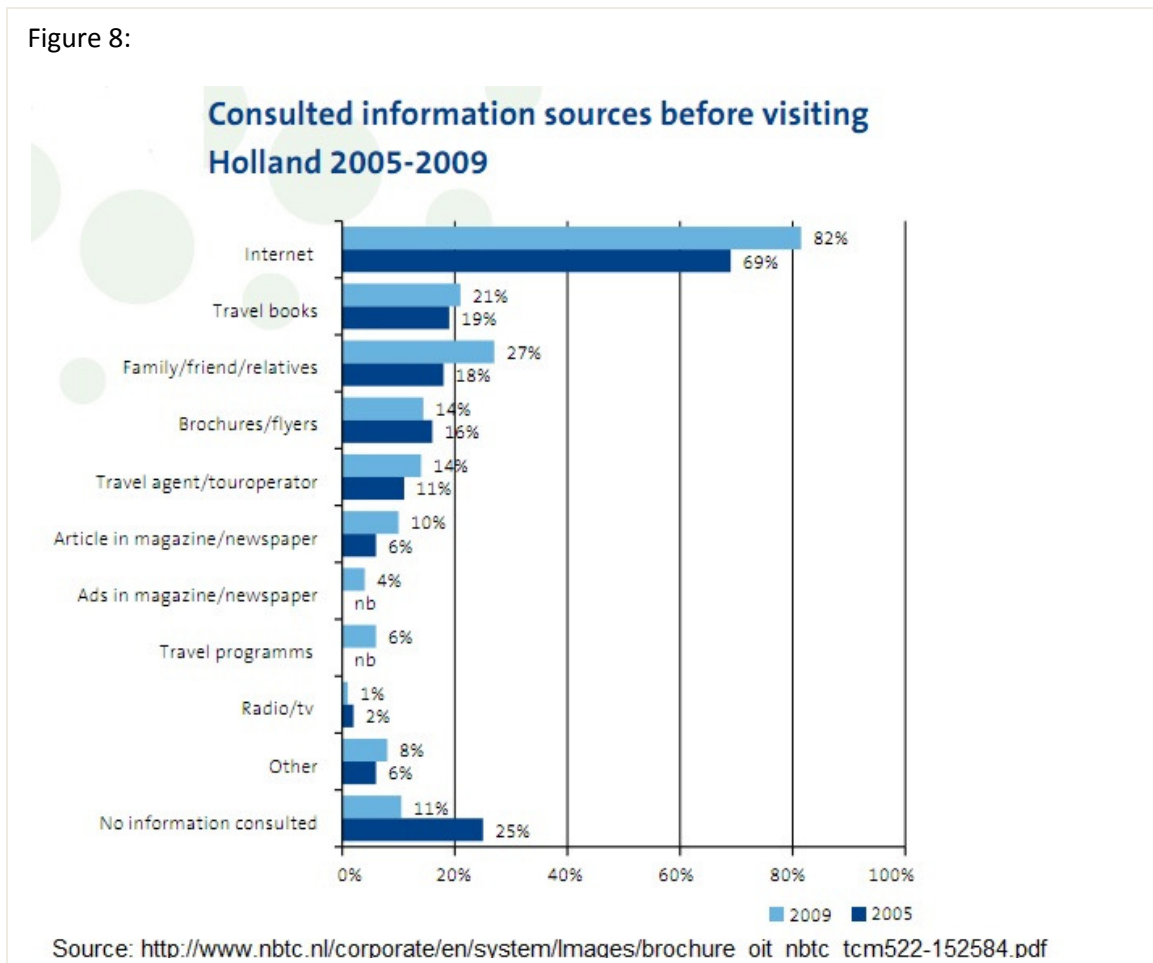Source: http://www.nbtc.nl/corporate/en/system/Images/brochure_oit_nbtc_tcm522-152584.pdf

Figure 8 is a graph collected from a report compiled by the NBTC on inbound tourism to the Netherlands. The graph shows the information sources used by tourists prior to going on vacation. Clearly the internet is one of the most used sources of information for finding out about travel destinations. The next largest group is from family, friends and relatives.

These trends support the idea that companies should use social media since so many users are influenced by content that is found there. This is also why it is important to control some of the information that is available so potential customers can easily find the official relevant information but also to moderate possible negative reviews and respond to issues before they escalate. Although blogs are a popular social networking channel, for Gassan Diamonds as a social media channel it is not seen as an effective option because there is little evidence to support that travellers use blogs to look for travel advice or information.

According to the report, review sites are also very important for the tourist's decision making process and user reviews will have a stronger influence than information received by a travel advisor.
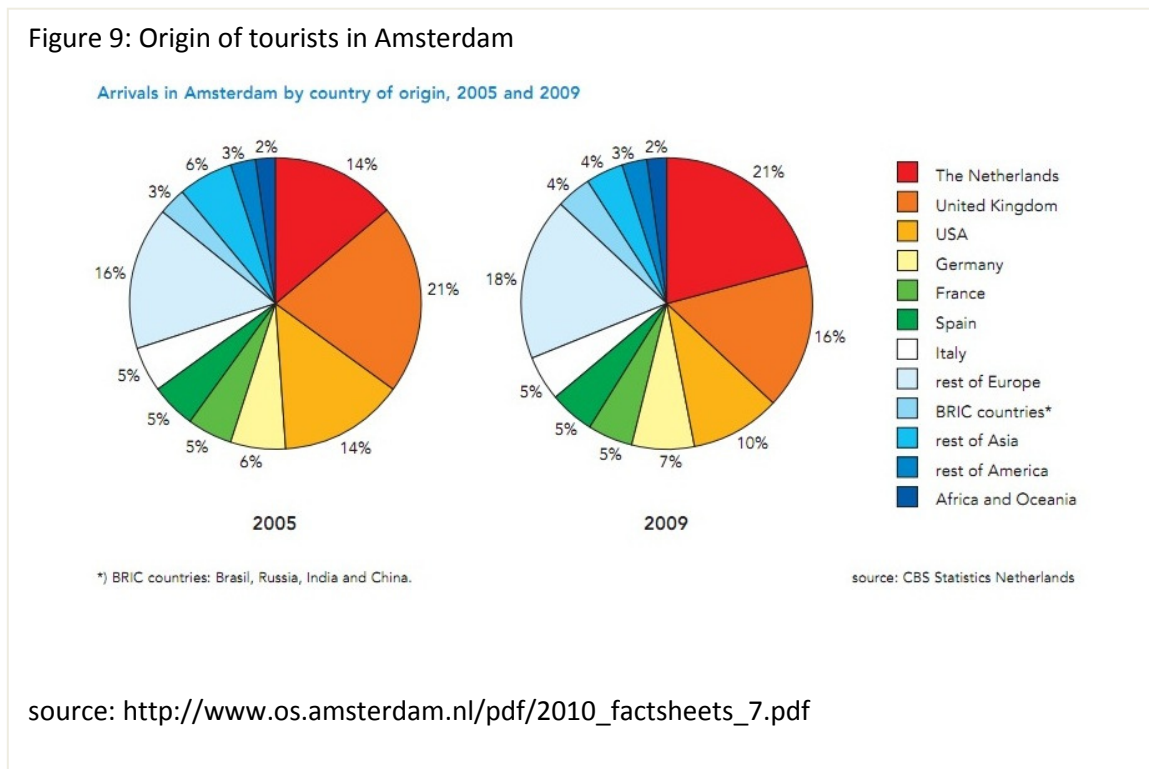
## 6.2 Market Analysis

### 6.2.1 Tourism in Amsterdam

Amsterdam is still an important tourist destination and attracting more visitors. Based on the yearly Dutch Tourism report compiled by the Dutch Bureau of conventions and tourism, Amsterdam has recently seen rising levels of tourism[24].

In 2009, Amsterdam attracted 4.9 million hotel guests with signs of growth indicated in early 2010. Amsterdam has seen an increase of tourists from around the Netherlands, Germany and France. Belgian and Chinese tourists are also coming to the city in larger numbers. The number of British tourists arriving has declined dramatically. Overall the number of American tourists has also dropped but has been replaced by growing tourism from within Europe. Reasons stated for the change in tourist composition are the expensive Euro, global recession from 2007 to 2009 and a decline in consumer confidence.

Despite the recession, the luxury markets are fairing slightly better with the capacity of luxury hotels in the area increasing the most in previous years compared to other hotel segments.

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[24] http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2010_factsheets_7.pdf Date Accessed  25.4.2011

Figure 9: Origin of tourists in Amsterdam

Arrivals in Amsterdam by country of origin, 2005 and 2009



2005

2009

*) BRIC countries: Brasil, Russia, India and China.

source: CBS Statistics Netherlands

source: http://www.os.amsterdam.nl/pdf/2010_factsheets_7.pdf

The most recent figures from over the Easter holiday period in 2011 show record numbers of visitors in Amsterdam indicating the tourism industry is doing well[25]. Figure 9 illustrates the composition of tourist nationalities coming to Amsterdam and how it has changed, the most visible change has been an increase of tourists from the BRIC countries and from the Netherlands with fewer tourists from the US and UK. Despite the drop in the number of tourists from these countries they are still the dominant tourist categories with a quarter of the tourist numbers coming from English speaking countries. Based on research done related to social media, these countries are also avid users of social media[26].

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[25] http://www.dutchdailynews.com/easter-tourism-2011/  Date Accessed  12.5.2011
[26] 2010 Social Network Analysis Report

6.2.2 Industry analysis

The head office of Gassan is located in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a politically stable country with relatively low crime rates. Recent political events such as the rise of nationalist parties within the government may have some negative effects on future tourist public opinion however The Netherlands and Amsterdam still remain popular tourist destinations. Globally the world is still recovering from a serious recession however luxury markets and the diamond retail industry have shown improvements.

The Rio Tinto Diamond group has forecast diamond jewellery demand to grow by 3% a year over the next decade. Diamonds are in high demand and demand is outgrowing supply meaning prices will also increase[27]. Diamonds are a popular subject and more should be done to promote Gassan Diamonds as a diamond centre of tourist interest in Amsterdam.

Luxury markets are also showing strong growth indicating demand for luxury products is going up with luxury sales predicted to grow worldwide by 8% in 2011.[28] The US and Europe were showing strong growth in the luxury markets however the emerging markets of China, Russia and Brazil are leading the way. Luxury products have seen a recovery after the recession since 2010. Jewellery along with other luxury products such as watches and other accessories were products that fell into the high growth category. However, The Bain&Company consulting firm report on the luxury industry also indicates changing consumer trends with customers becoming increasingly demanding and looking for integrated offline and online experiences[29].

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[27] http://www.riotintodiamonds.com/documents/Final_RTD_Review_2008.pdf Date Accessed: 18.5.2011
[28] http://blogs.forbes.com/anthonydemarco/2011/05/04/global-luxury-sales-to-grow-by-8-in-2011/ Date Accessed 12.5.2011
[29] http://www.bain.com/bainweb/About/press_release_detail.asp?id=28459&menu_url=for_the_media.asp Date Accessed  4.5.2011

## 6.3 Product Analysis

Gassan Diamonds sells high-end, quality products within the jewellery-luxury industry. The product collection ranges from loose diamond stones to finished jewellery and watches. Prices of the products found at Gassan Diamonds go from affordable to exclusive prices so that there are product ranges that can appeal to wide user group. Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the types of products found at Gassan Diamonds in Amsterdam.

Figure 10: Gassan Diamonds Diamond Ring



Source: http://www.gassandiamonds.nl/collectie/gassan-121-haute-joaillerie.html

Gassan also owns the patent to the diamond cut the Gassan 121 which has been recently developed and is exclusively available through Gassan Diamonds.

Figure 11. Gassan Diamonds Patented Cut



source:

http://www.gassandiamonds.com/index_testtaal.asp?n=119&t=2&s=140&l=5

In addition to the physical products that are available for purchase at the factory and stores, a part of the product experience is a free tour which is done before the purchase stage. This falls into the service category where buyers and interested tourists are informed about the relevant information needed when purchasing diamonds. The tour covers general topics about the company's history, the history of diamonds and the process of cutting and polishing all together lasting 45min. At the end of the tour, tourists are offered a chance to purchase items or loose stones that have been presented during the tour or are free to browse through the other stores located in the building.

These elements of the product selection, both the tangible product and the customer service, should be highlighted within the social media profiles that are to be developed.

## 6.4 Competitive Analysis

There are currently 3 diamond factories that offer similar tours to Gassan Diamonds in Amsterdam[30]. In addition to Gassan Diamonds there is Coster Diamonds, City Diamonds and Zazare Diamonds[31]. Out of these competitors only Coster Diamonds is directly involved in any social media efforts.

Zazare diamonds have a well developed web page however no involvement in social media and with little to no evidence of an online strategy outside of their corporate webpage[32]. This was deducted by using Google search among various other search engines and social media trackers which resulted in no hits through searches of key words such as Diamonds, Amsterdam and company names.

Figure 12 shows which social media channels Gassan Diamond's direct competitors are currently using.

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[30] http://www.amsterdam.info/diamonds/ Date Accessed: 18.5.2011
[31] http://www.fashion-style-guide.com/amsterdam-diamonds/ Date Accessed 15.5.2011
[32]. http://www.zazarediamonds.com Date Accessed 28.4.2011

Figure 12. Assets Comparison Table

| | Facebook | LinkedIn | Twitter | Youtube | FourSquare | Flickr | Company website |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gassan** | X<br>23 likes | | | X<br>1<br>subscriber | X<br>2 check ins | X | X |
| **Coster Diamonds** | X<br>18 likes | X<br>22<br>followers | X<br>4<br>followers | X<br>2<br>subscribers | X<br>20 check ins | X | X |
| **City Diamonds Amsterdam** | | | | | | | X |
| **Tiffany& Co** | X<br>942,094<br>likes | X<br>4,050<br>followers | | X<br>1,261<br>subscribers | X<br>50 check ins | X | X |
| **Zazare Diamonds** | | | | | X<br>1 check in | | X |

Source: social networks competitor profile pages

Coster Diamonds posts on twitter once or twice a month using twitter updates to promote products and offers and to inform users of new newsletters and magazine updates.

Figures 13 and 14 show the profiles of Coster Diamonds on two of the most widely used social networks. Coster Diamonds has yet to develop a fully active Facebook profile and uses the social network mainly as a placeholder while the twitter profile is more developed.

Figure 13 Coster Diamonds Facebook Profile
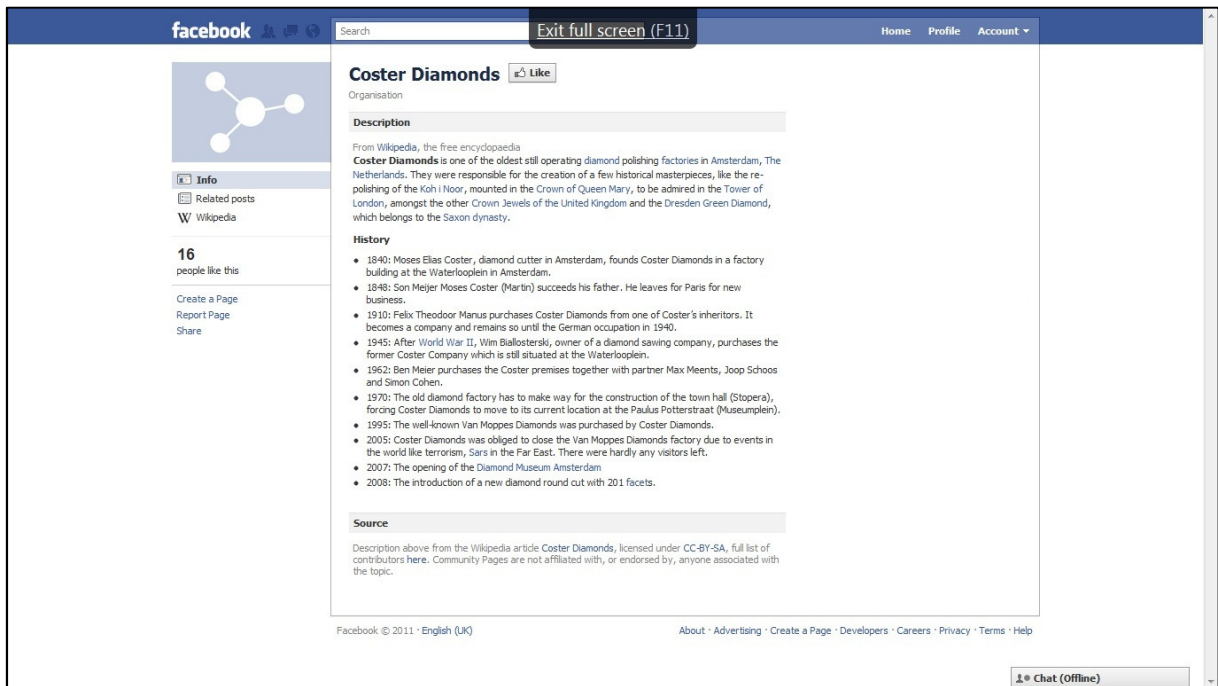


source: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Coster-Diamonds/107917652563109 Date accessed 18.5.2011

Figure 14 Coster Diamonds Twitter Profile



source: http://twitter.com/#!/Coster_Diamonds Date Accessed 18.5.2011

The companies listed above directly compete with Gassan Diamonds with similar product offerings at a local level that fulfil needs of the consumer and aim to attract the same consumer groups. However other competitors need to be taken into consideration in regards to online presence. Many companies are now becoming more involved in social media and

this includes other global jewellery companies such as Tiffany&co. Tiffany's is a well known, reputable brand name that has a well developed social media strategy. They are active on most of the previously mentioned social networks and have a well developed fan base, for example



Figure 15. Tiffany's Facebook Profile

source: http://www.facebook.com/Tiffany

Tiffanys official Facebook page has 912,282 'Likes' as of May 2011[33]. Cartier is another jeweller that has established themselves early on in the social media channels. Their official Facebook page has over 100,000 'Likes.'[34]'

Figure 15 shows the first part of Tiffany's official Facebook page. Similar to other pages, pictures of the products take precedent and are the most prominent part of the page.

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[33] http://www.facebook.com/Tiffany Date Accessed 2.5.2011
[34] http://www.facebook.com/Cartier Date Accessed 2.5.2011

Comparing other jeweller's social media profiles it is possible to see that many companies have been creative with their pages. One common theme is that the pages are focused on images. These pages are introduced with large images inviting users to 'Like' the brand to gain further access. This way companies are offering incentives to join the pages and receive more information and agree to future contact. Other trends used by companies are to use the pages as portals to corporate websites for example the Mikimoto Facebook page (see figure 16) uses pictures of collection pieces as links to get users to continue on browsing on the corporate websites.

Figure 16 Mikimoto Facebook Profile
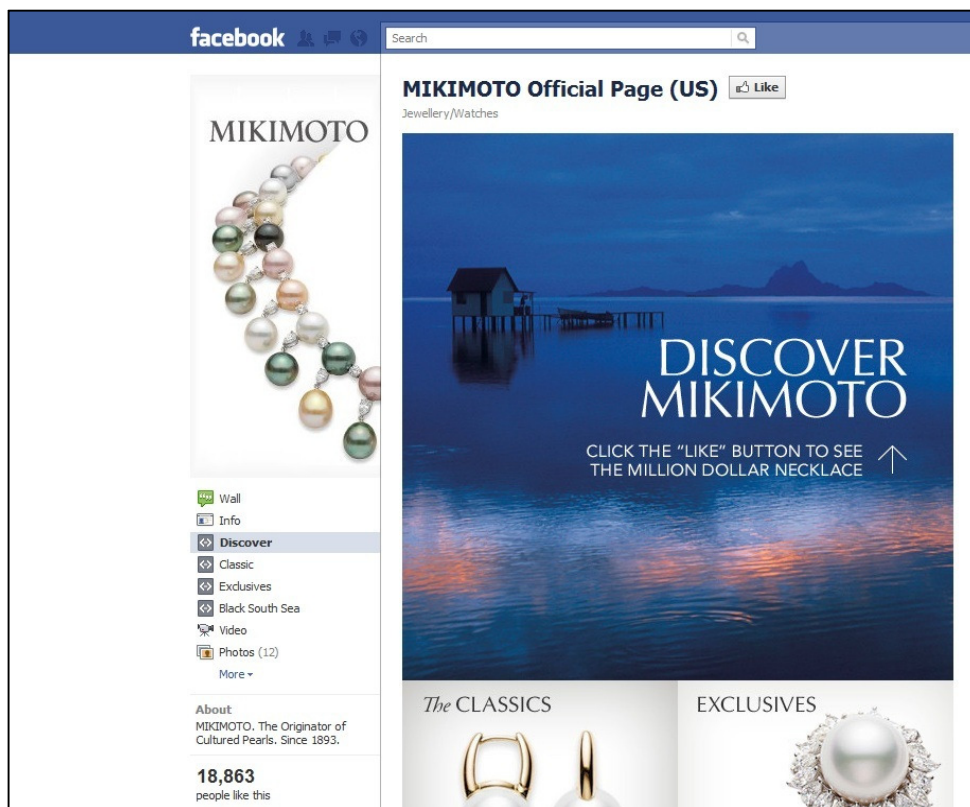


Source:http://www.facebook.com/MIKIMOTO Date Accessed: 10.5.2011

Social media profiles are useful gateways to invite users to the company web pages which allow users to learn more about the company. In Gassan's case they can be used to highlight the opportunity for tourists to book tours at the factory.

These pages also offer product information, newsletters and company information. However, in the competitors' profiles there is limited interaction on most pages with the users. For instance users are not allowed to upload their own content on Coster, Cartier or Mikimoto pages and while users are allowed to comment on posts there are no responses from the company to user queries. Some companies however are very active on their discussion boards, such as Tiffanys, and use these to communicate and interact directly with users.

## 6.5 Target Market Profile

The social media plan is targeting tourists that are coming to Amsterdam or are already in Amsterdam who are looking into options for where to go during their stay. More specifically social media is meant to provide information to tourists who are travelling outside of a tour group or without a tour guide.

Due to purchasing power and the price ranges of the available products, Gassan Diamonds will target segments between the ages of 30 to 50 who are most likely to purchase products and still within the common social media user demographics.

## 7.0 Social Media Strategy

## 7.1 Objectives

The main objective of the social media strategy is to attract more tourists to the Gassan Diamonds factory located in the centre of Amsterdam.

## 7.2 Strategy

The objectives are to be achieved through increasing consumer awareness of the Gassan Diamonds brand name and increasing the brands online presence making it more accessible.

According to Cory Williamson, an expert on social media, a standard social media plan should include the following 6 steps. First the planning stage of where to become involved and which social media channels would be most beneficial. Step 2 is to do the research and see where the conversations are taking place and what is being said. Step 3 is to set up the relevant profiles and implement the first stages of the plan. Step 4 is to set up specific goals that should be achieved through social media. Step 5 is to get involved and join the conversation, this can either be reactive communication joining in on existing questions and discussions or this can take a proactive form where the company initiates the conversation. Step 6 is the final step which includes measuring ROI. This stage includes monitoring developments and trends related to relevant key words and also developments and interest being developed by the social media efforts[35].

The implementation of a social media plan will follow the phases of awareness, then engagement and finally social commerce which is what businesses should aim for. In the first stages the business will experience low levels of social equity where users first become aware of the page. By building on that the next level increases engagement and increases long term communication.

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[35] http://www.slideshare.net/corywilliamson/creating-a-social-media-plan-2529114 Date accessed 11.4.2011

Finally, if done right the profile pages will result in high levels of social equity where users will opt in for registration, offer user made content such as product reviews and be involved in communication[36].

When it comes to content that is being put on social media sites it is essential that a brand name does not focus only on selling. The idea of social media is to build relationships and consumers are wary of companies that only focus on gaining a profit. To benefit the most from social media, content goals to aim would be to ask questions and respond to user comments, provoke engaging dialogue and importantly to build and earn a reputation in the community. Dialogue should be transparent and authentic. To offer valuable information to the community the brand profiles can be used to link to resources that are relevant or can offer useful information. By linking to other websites the company is getting involved in the community and networks may even reciprocate the favour by being linked somewhere else.

When a profile page is set up and the aim is to increase user interaction, a set of rules of engagement should be determined to know who will be involved in the conversation and how to respond to questions and comments. Negative comments may also be received and just deleting such comments may result in user backlash or a negative reputation. Responses to any comments should always be kind and professional.  When establishing a social media profile and committing to a plan the next point of action should be to develop an editorial calendar that will be followed. The editorial calendar should state when and what should be published to which profile and it should be used to create consistency between posts and various profile pages.

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[36] http://www.slideshare.net/corywilliamson/creating-a-social-media-plan-2529114 Date Accessed 11.4.2011

Before building a comprehensive online profile Gassan must determine the level of commitment and available resources that will be put into the project. The social media strategy has been divided into three levels based on Cory Williamson's social media plan[37], which will be referred to as levels of corporate commitment.

Each level will describe an alternative strategy based on the level of resources and effort needed to maintain this strategy with Level I being the strategy requiring the least social media interaction and level III requiring the most.

## 7.2.1 Level I

**Objectives**

The objective of a level I strategy is to establish place holders on major social media channels so that the company is visible online and easier to search for. The company must secure key words and usernames to protect the brand name.

**Strategy**

At level I, the first step would be to set up placeholder profiles online and secure key words and usernames on social networks to protect the brand name. This level uses a minimal amount of engagement and is considered a one way communication strategy with little to no active engagement of network users. For this strategy Gassan would need to set up profiles on the following social media networks: Facebook, Youtube, Linkedin, Twitter, Foursquare and Flickr.

The basic identifying information should be present on each profile including click through links leading back to the company website. Information that needs to be available on each profile: Name of the company, company logo, location and map, contact information, and basic company profile.

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[37] http://www.slideshare.net/corywilliamson/creating-a-social-media-plan-2529114 Date Accessed 11.4.2011

These profiles should be updated every 3-4 months to follow seasonal changes and inform customers about any changes to the company. This strategy will require a minimum amount of direct communication with consumers and network contacts and also a minimal amount of content production.

The second part of the strategy is to set up a Google alerts account to automatically be informed about new developments and discussions regarding the brand name and the related industry. Research and monitoring of developments are vital to stay up to date on developments and what is being said about the company.

**Tactics**

Professional profiles should be created on the most widely used social networks that have been identified in this report. Resources should be divided evenly between the social networks used (see figure 17.) If possible, the accounts should be set up with a common name so that they are relatable to the company, this will ensure connectivity between the pages.

Figure 17. Level I Social Media Mix
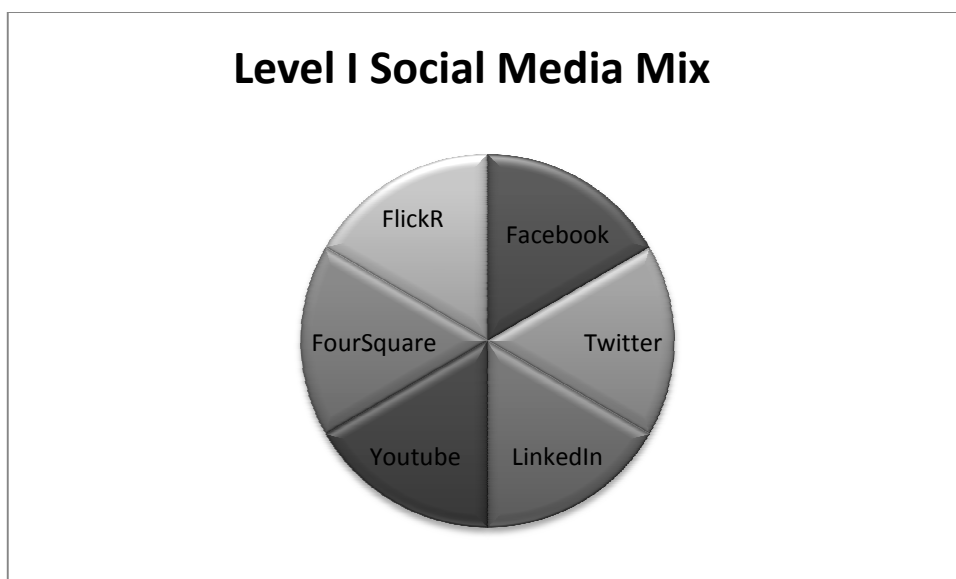
The profile pages should also link to each other. Since at this level the aim is to create page holders the web profiles will be closed to user uploaded content and comments so the pages will require less monitoring.

## 7.2.2 Level II

**Objectives:**

The objectives of a level II strategy would be to set up key profiles and start engaging with users by answering key questions and placing more content.

**Strategy**

The strategy would be to develop user interaction by increasing the level of content and frequency of postings and creating content that will be interesting and provide value to the customer. This would also involve more monitoring of pages and increased dedicated time to monitor what is being said about the brand and responding to direct questions and industry related topics. It is also important to monitor key influencers of the conversations.

In order to attract more users to the pages and increase brand awareness, short term promotions will be done and incentives offered on profile pages for users to join such as competitions or relation to promotion information.

Profiles will be created on the largest of the relevant social media platforms but content will be focused on 3 of the platforms, the remaining platforms will act as placeholders and portals to direct to other pages with more content. The resources should be split so that Facebook, Youtube and Twitter are the most used and with the most engaging content. Linkedin, Foursquare and FlickR will act as placeholder profiles with fewer updates but linking to the other profiles and corporate pages.

Figure 18. Level II Social Media Mix

## Level II Social Media Mix

FlickR
Foursquare
Facebook
Youtube
Twitter
LinkedIN
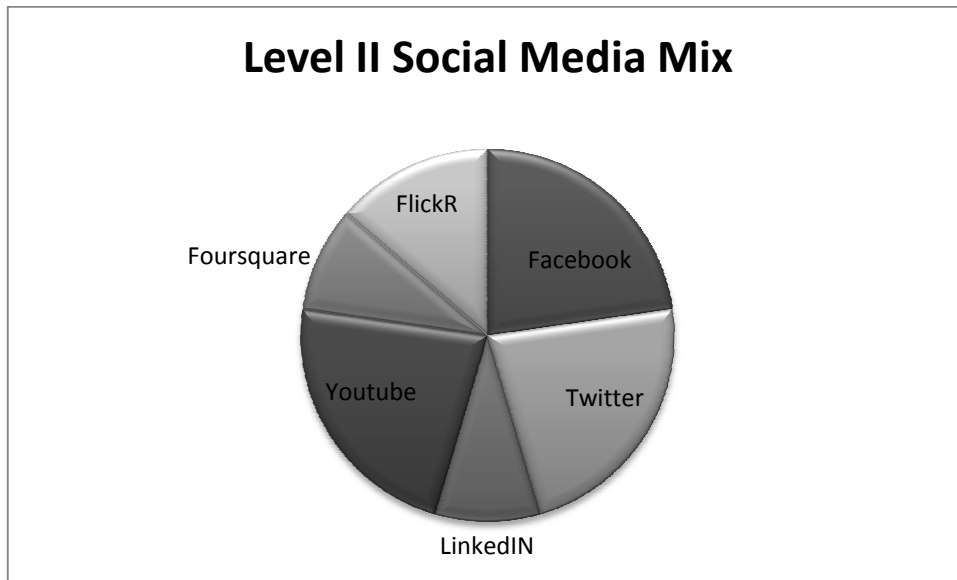
LinkedIn is relevant to have as a placeholder name for search purposes so that the name is visible online and provides users with more information when searching for results. However the website is more frequently used as a business tool for B2B purposes or for professional networking. This is why it is recommended that a profile be maintained on LinkedIn but with communication efforts focused on other platforms that encourage more engagement from users.

To establish search results to these profiles, the profile links should be added to the company website and also other relevant sources where people will see the Gassan company name and may be interested in finding out more. This includes store locations and other content aggregator websites such as www.holland.com. At this level of commitment there should be more integration between all levels of the communication strategy both offline and online.

**Tactics**

Tactics will include periodically developing short-term promotions and competitions to increase user interest and to offer users more incentives to follow web pages. Some content will be restricted to users who are willing to 'Like' pages and by doing so associating with the company pages and agreeing to future contact. More interactive content will be offered to users of Youtube in the form of videos and comments.

It is essential to the strategy to set up monitoring platforms and check each profile 2-3 times a week to check for updates and any user questions so that the company responds within a reasonable time frame. Write a publishing calendar to determine what will go out and when beforehand so that the content is consistent.

### 7.2.3 Level III

**Objectives**

The objective of a level III is to establish active profiles on several key platforms and build relationships with users and improve brand visibility by increasing page views and user engagement.

**Strategy**

A level III strategy combines active content uploading and user interaction with thorough research and monitoring to obtain a high level of user engagement and effective social media use. At this level the company should be active on the key social media profiles with the largest amount of followers but also target locals and niche areas through expanding onto social network Hyves. Monitoring of social networks should be done at a constant level with a routine of checking for updates and questions on a daily basis.

Figure 19. Level III Social Media Mix
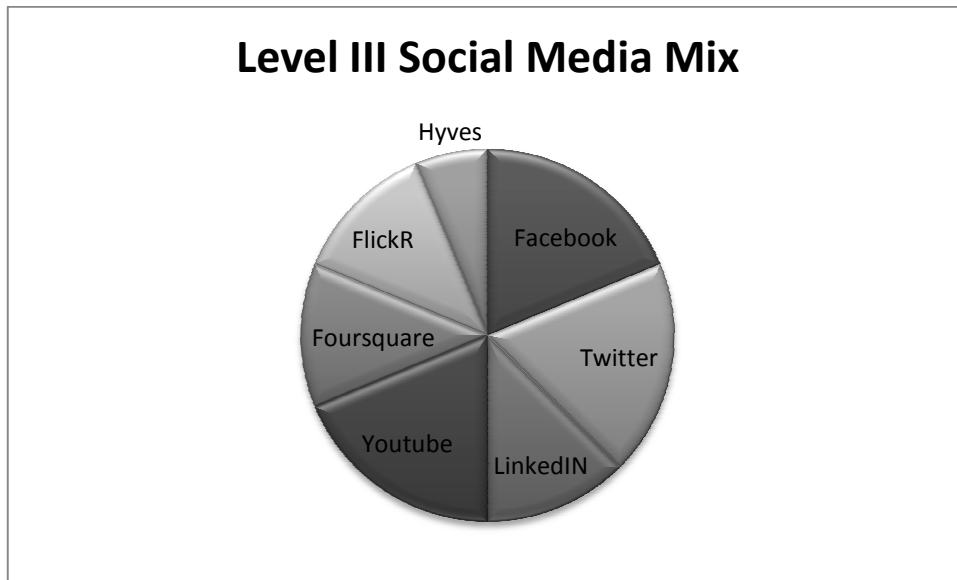


As seen in the figure, most emphasis will be placed on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. An official account will be made on Hyves to target Niche groups and specially the growing number of Dutch tourists arriving in Amsterdam. FourSquare, FlickR and Hyves will have fewer updates but will be more than just placeholder accounts. These will be updated less frequently but still monitored on a frequent basis and updated with new content such as pictures. Youtube will play a larger role than in the previous strategy options with more effort being put into videos uploaded and more types of content. The online and offline efforts of the communication strategy should be coordinated so that the online profiles complement offline efforts and offline channels such as advertisements and store promotions will highlight the existence of these profiles.

Overall this strategy will require the most commitment and planning out of the 3 options. It will also include further development and evolution as monitoring of results should be used to determine improvements that can be made over time.

**Tactics**

Strategy III would combine the efforts of Strategy II which includes more short term promotions over various social platforms. It would also include creation of publicized competitions to promote the brand name and increase interest and encourage involvement. Along with these tactics the company should frequently post new content on all of the various social networking sites including pictures, status posts, information and constant monitoring of discussions and reviews. (See Measuring ROI for descriptions on how to monitor social networks)

**7.2.4 Update Frequency Table over Level I, II III**

The frequency of updates has been determined by comparing competitors such as Tiffany&Co and Coster Diamonds and determining what type of strategy they are following. Based on frequency of updates, availability over social media platforms and level of content Tiffanys is operating at a level III while Coster is using a level I. Using these as reference points, the publishing frequency has been determined for levels I, II and III.

Figure 20. Update Frequency Table

| Profile | Update Schedule Level I | Update Schedule Level II | UpdateSchedule Level III | Content |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facebook | Once every 2/3 months | Once per week | 2/3 per week | Pictures<br>Status Updates<br>News Articles<br>Industry related links<br>Competitions<br>Promotions<br>Responses |
| Twitter | Once every 2/3 months | Once per week | 2/3 per week | Tweets<br>Links<br>competitions<br>Promotions<br>Responses |
| Flickr | Once every 2/3 months | Once per month | Twice per month | Pictures<br>Collection images<br>Store pictures<br>Locations |
| Linkedin | update when relevant | update when relvant | Every 1 -2 months | Company information<br>Logo<br>Contact information |
| Youtube | Once every 3 months | 2 times per month | Once per month | Videos<br>Advertisement<br>Slideshows<br>Promotions<br>Comments |
| FourSquare | Once every 3 months | 1 per month | 1 -2 per month | Contact information<br>Pictures<br>Check-in Specials |
| Hyves | n/a | n/a | Once per month | Contact information<br>Company information<br>Pictures<br>Status posts |

## 7.3 Content Recommendations

In order for Gassan Diamonds to connect with users, content that is posted on social media networks should be planned with a purpose and offer value to the viewer. As previously mentioned, users of social media respond well to pictures and as luxury goods are all about appearance it is recommended that Gassan Diamonds adds many more images to connect with users and gain their interest. The following content suggestions have been based on competitor analysis and general trends of social network postings by other brands.

Text posts such as Tweets or Facebook status updates need to demonstrate Gassan Diamonds' expertise in the area of diamond polishing and diamond jewellery. The objective is to attract tourists to the diamond factory and this should be done by increasing interest in the overall industry and how diamonds are made and processed, but specifically to Gassan Diamonds by demonstrating knowledge of the subject.

Examples of content in posts could relate to advice on jewellery and etiquette, fashion trends and recommendations on what pieces go with certain events. Also explanations on common misconceptions or answering frequently asked questions that are asked by current visiting tourists.

Other content should relate to new stores or product information, current promotions, anniversaries or important dates related to the company, holiday reminders related to jewellery and gift giving.

## 7.4 Measuring ROI

An important part of measuring ROI is tracking results. One method of doing this is to set up monitoring channels. This is an essential part of any social media strategy regardless of whether it is for a level I corporate commitment strategy or level III.

There are many tools available that will monitor key words online and follow what is being said about the brand. The following websites offer both free tools and professional software for the purpose of monitoring and managing social media:

- **Google Alerts**- a tool developed by Google which allows users to track key words and websites and sends updates to users emails with links to the relevant websites.
- **Socialmention.com –** Similar to Google alerts but tracks mentions of keywords over social media platforms.
- **Technorati.com –** Real time search engine for user-generated media by tags or keywords[38]
- **Twitter search –** search engine to search tweets by keyword or tags
- **Radian6 –** social media monitoring software designed for businesses

Tools such as Google alerts should be used to monitor what is going online and relevant discussions that are happening that the company can get involved in. Google Alerts tracks key words over various sources including news sites and other networks. It is also important to track what is being said about the brand name. Youtube also has its own tracking software that can be used to review who is following the site and viewing videos.

Social media is a useful tool to use to monitor what is being said across various platforms. It works similarly to Google alerts but over social media platforms.

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[38] http://technorati.com/about-technorati/ Date Accessed 24.4.2011

Over time the combined effect would be to see an increase in bookings online. These tools should be used to track developments in the social media strategy. Success can be seen in the number of page views, likes, fans and followers that the pages attract. To see valuable results these should translate into tour bookings and increased number of visitors to the Gassan Diamond factory. The websites can be linked to tools such as Google Analytics which monitor where traffic is coming from to the booking pages. Profile pages can be considered useful if it can be measured that they are successfully driving traffic to the booking pages.

Figure 21. SocialMention.com Screenshot
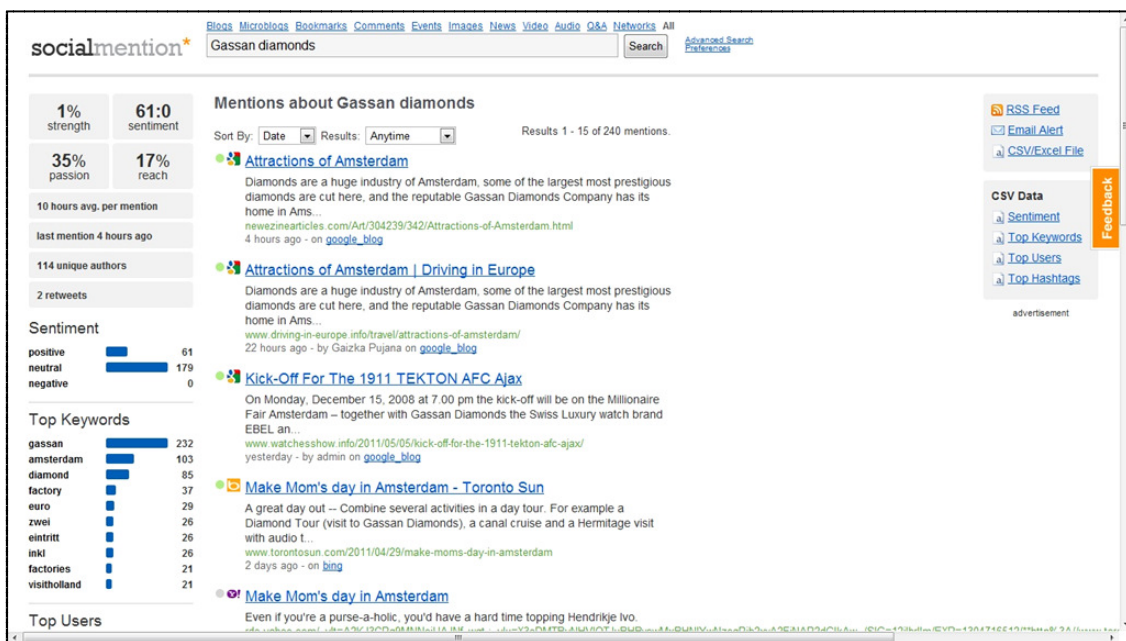


Source: www.socialmention.com

The image above is a screenshot image of results found when searching for Gassan Diamonds. The results show mentions in various sources for example blogs and press releases and it also shows which are the key words associated with the search results and whether the references are positive, negative or neutral.

These sorts of findings are relevant to know what is happening in the industry and may give ideas to new content that can be posted or follow up on negative reviews and which may result in bad PR[39].

Google analytics allows companies to track where visitors are coming from to the website and how many times links are being clicked. Facebook Insights can be used to analyse activity on Facebook profiles over periods of time. These tools are important in evaluating social media effectiveness by looking at what content is attracting interest and what is not. Monitoring should be a constant part of a social media strategy since changes are easy to apply and to analyse[40].

# 8.0 Budget

It is recommended that a company commits a budget dedicated to social media to make it effective. On average marketers starting to develop a social media plan spend up 6 hours per week monitoring and updating social media[41].

Setting up social media profiles is free however developing content and the man hours spent updating and planning should be taken into account in the budgeting.

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[39] Social Media Marketing Industry Report 2011 Date Accessed 15.5.2011
[40] http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/your-business/grow/expanding-the-business/social-media-advice-you-need-to-follow/article2008633/ Date Accessed 18.5.2011
[41] Social media Marketing Industry Report 2011 Date Accessed 15.5.2011

## 9.0 Conclusion

Amsterdam is a popular tourist destination and tourist numbers are continuing to grow to pre-recession levels. Amsterdam has many sights to offer and one of the city's many attractions is its reputation as a diamond centre. Gassan Diamonds is attracting many visitors every year however the company could increase its appeal through the use of Social media.

Social media is a new form of communication that has been developed in the last 5 years and has yet to reach its full potential. It has only recently become a noticeable tool used by businesses for marketing communication purposes and so its place in business has not been fully understood yet. Studies are currently taking place to determine the various ways in which social media can be used effectively by businesses and what the full potential of this tool is.  A clear trend is the increasing adoption of social media in communication and marketing efforts by businesses and also growth in the number of users worldwide but it has yet to be determined which social media mix is going to work for any given company.

The key idea behind social media and business is the ability to build relationships and be in direct contact with the customer.  Social media and the internet in general have changed the way businesses communication with customers by altering the status quo, shifting power of communication to the customers and making conversations two-way. The internet has also allowed for businesses to reach a much wider audience at a fraction of the cost.

By understanding what the trends are in social media and who is using what, it is possible to develop an effective social media plan that complements the corporate objectives of a company. There are various points of view on where a social media plan fits in with the corporate strategy. In this report, based on research into trends and recommendations the social media plan has been developed as an element of the communication strategy.

Gassan Diamonds has been the client for this research project and the focus of the social media plan. Three strategic options were devised based on levels of corporate commitment needed to implement each plan. These were divided into level I, II and III with level I involving setting up social media profiles as placeholders and level III involving full social media integration into the communication plan and objectives aimed at maximum levels of user engagement.

## 10.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that Gassan Diamonds adopt at least a level II social media strategy so that social media tools can be used effectively.

The communication strategy and overall marketing strategy should be consolidated to promote the social media efforts of Gassan. Offline channels such as magazine ads and in-store information should complement the communication strategy by drawing more viewers to the online channels. This can be done by mentioning or indicating the availability of online communication networks such as phrasing "visit us on Facebook" in ads. In this way the social media can be used to its full potential by combining online and offline efforts.

The most important characteristic of Social media is the ease of information sharing. Content placed online should be accessible, organized and available to share and link to.

The aim of social media networks is to gain the permission of consumers to market to specific targeted groups. By attracting 'likes' on Facebook and followers on Twitter, consumers are consenting to receive more information on the product. Seth Godin calls this permission marketing which is a change from traditional interruption marketing and more

effective[42]. The consumer will be more likely to respond if they are offered content with value in contrast to pure promotional efforts.

Comparing competitors' websites such as Tiffanys profile and Coster Diamonds, content include pictures of products and diamonds. There is also the option for users to upload their own pictures to the pages.

Tiffanys updates their facebook page on a weekly basis providing followers information on trends, products, celebrity news and company news. In contrast Coster Diamonds remains a placeholder page with company information and no Facebook 'Wall' or status updates. For Gassan to remain competitive in this field it is recommended to increase direct interaction with consumers and take notice of competitors.

A part of the social media strategy must offer incentives to join in order to attract 'likes' and 'follower.' For example Tiffany offers more information, content and updates to users who 'like' their pages. Without joining users are able to see basic page content and company information.

Through coordination and constant monitoring of results, the social media plan should develop and evolve over time to indicate what methods work best for the company to achieve the goal of more tourist visits. The strategy should be flexible and be adaptable to new trends. It is also recommended to have a dedicated employee working on social media to maintain a consistent voice for the company.

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[42] "Permission Marketing" Seth Godin 2002

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## Appendix Contents

Appendix I List of Relevant Social Media Sites and their Categories

Apendix II Survey

Appendix III Survey Results

Appendix IV Research Proposal

Appendix V Literature Review

## Appendix

## Appendix I  List of Relevant Social Media Sites and their categories

| Category | Social Network | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Video Sharing | Youtube<br><br>www.youtube.com | Youtube is a website online that hosts video content that can be shared and uploaded by users. The website is localized in 25 different countries and available in 43 different languages, user demographics range from ages 18-54 years old. The website has millions of subscribers all over the globe with millions of videos viewed and uploaded each day[43]. |
| Picture Sharing tools | FlickR<br><br>www.flickr.com | FlickR is an online photo management and sharing application with many features such as tagging and geotagging photos. The site hosts more than 5 billion images. |
| Social Network Places | Facebook<br><br>www.facebook.com | Social networking service launched in February 2004 with over 600 million reported users in March 2011. Users create personal profiles and can add 'friends' to build networks. Users exchange information and messages, may join common interest groups and add other personal information[44]. |
| | MySpace | Social networking service with 34 million users[45]. Users create profile and use the portal service to view pictures and music. |
| | Hyves | Most popular social networking service in the Netherlands with over 10 million user accounts. |
| Niche Social Network | LinkedIn<br><br>www.linkedin.com | A social networking site with a business orientation. Described as being used for professional networking. Reportedly with over 200 million users worldwide[46]. |

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[43] http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics)

[44] http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-has-more-than-600-million-users-goldman-tells-clients-2011-1

[45] https://www.google.com/adplanner/planning/site_profile#siteDetails?identifier=myspace.com&geo=001&trait_type=1&lp=true

[46] http://mashable.com/2011/03/22/linkedin-surpasses-100-million-users-infographic/

| Micro publication tools | **Twitter**<br><br>**www.twitter.com** | A real time information network with public streams. Users publish text based posts called Tweets up to 140 characters and allows for users to link pictures and links. Created March 2006 and now has 200 million registered users. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12889048 |
|---|---|---|
| **Geolocation** | **FourSquare**<br><br>www.foursquare.com | Location based social networking website designed for mobile devices. Users are able to post where they are by 'checking in.' Users collect points and badges by checking in to locations. The site was set up in 2009 and now has 8 million registered users[47]. |
| **Review Site** | **TripAdvisor**<br><br>**www.tripadvisor.com** | World's largest travel site that allows customers to post travel information, look for reviews and opionions and other travel related content. Established February 2000. |

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[47] http://content.usatoday.com/communities/technologylive/post/2011/03/video-foursquare-ceo-on-the-future-of-mobile/1?csp=34tech&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+usatoday-TechTopStories+%28Tech+-+Top+Stories%29

## Appendix II Survey

Tour Location: _____

_____ Date: _____

1. Age Group:

Under 20      20-29          30-39          40-49          50-60          60 and above

2. Nationality:

3. How did you book your trip to Amsterdam?

Travel Agent                    Online                         Phone Booking
                    Other: _____

4. Do you have an account on one  or more of the following social media Networks:

Facebook (Social Network)

MySpace (Social Network)

LinkedIN (Niche Social Network)

Twitter (Micropublishing)

FourSquare (Location Based)

WordPress (Blog)

FlickR (Picture sharing)

Other: _____

5. Do you use any online social media for tips on where to go when travelling?

                         Yes                    No
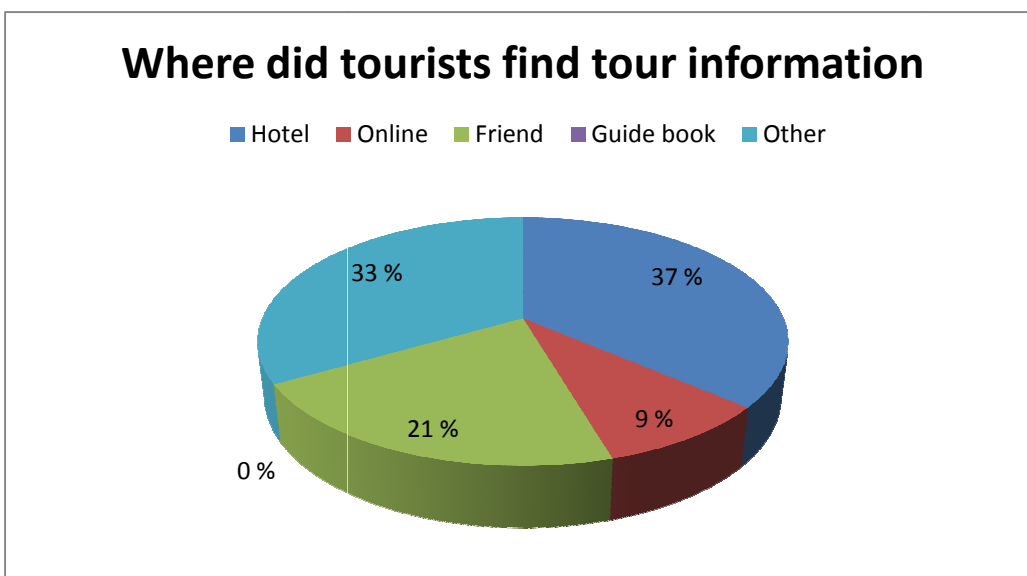
6. Where did you hear about this tour?
    a. Hotel
    b. Online
    c. Friend
    d. Guide book
    e. Other

# Apendix III Survey results

Survey Results

| Nationality | |
|---|---|
| Argentina | 2 |
| Australia | 1 |
| Belgium | 1 |
| Brazil | 2 |
| Bulgaria | 1 |
| Chile | 1 |
| Estonia | 1 |
| Finland | 1 |
| France | 1 |
| Germany | 3 |
| Hungary | 1 |
| India | 1 |
| Italy | 3 |
| Norway | 1 |
| Portugal | 3 |
| Romania | 1 |
| Russia | 1 |
| Saudi Arabia | 1 |
| Spain | 1 |
| UK | 2 |
| USA | 4 |

| Age | |
|---|---|
| 0-20 | 1 |
| 20-29 | 25 |
| 30-39 | 6 |
| 40-49 | 1 |
| 50-60 | 0 |
| 60+ | 0 |

| Social Network Profiles | |
|---|---|
| Facebook | 24 |
| MySpace | 1 |
| LinkedIn | 12 |
| Twitter | 9 |
| Foursquare | 1 |
| Wordpress | 2 |
| FlickR | 3 |
| Other | 7 |
| None | 2 |

| Booking Method | |
|---|---|
| Travel Agent | 3 |
| Online | 22 |
| Phone | 0 |
| Other | 9 |

## Social Media Profiles

- Facebook
- MySpace
- LinkedIn
- Twitter
- Foursquare
- Wordpress
- FlickR
- Other
- None

3 %
5 %
3 %
2 %
15 %
11 %
39 %
20 %
2 %

## Use Social Media for Travel advice

Yes

No

## Where did tourists find tour information

- Hotel
- Online
- Friend
- Guide book
- Other

33 %
37 %
9 %
21 %
0 %

## Appendix IV: Research Proposal

Contents

A study of the potential contribution of social media in marketing Gassan Diamonds to tourists in Amsterdam.

1.0 Title

The title of my research project is a study of the potential contribution of social media in marketing Gassan Diamonds to tourists in Amsterdam using Gassan Diamonds as a case study.

2.0 Background

The motivation to do this project lies in the growing popularity of social media that is available in the modern technological world. Nowadays most websites link to twitter feeds, facebook pages, linkedin profiles etc. It is clear that this sort of media is having an effect on the world and needs more study in its application. Companies and businesses have chosen to take many different approaches in an attempt to manage social media and internet marketing in a way that gets the consumer's attention. However some attempts have been more successful than others.

My proposal is a study into the application of social media in business and develop an internet marketing strategy that fits into the organizations overall marketing strategy and vision. Previous research done on the topic is still current and constantly changing, research that was done a year or two ago now has to be re-evaluated now that some time has passed since the emergence of social media in 2007.

3.0 Problem Statement

The problem here is how to increase consumer awareness and interest in the Gassan Diamonds brand name using a coordinated social media strategy. The objective would be to gain an increase in tour bookings and website hits for Gassan Diamonds which can be seen over a longer period of time.

As previously mentioned the problem within this research area is the lack of understanding on how to incorporate social media into overall corporate strategy.

4.0 Research Objectives and Questions

The research project will be divided into 3 parts. First part will be used to determine the overall trends in the travel industry in relation to internet use and social media. This section will focus on secondary information available online and in text cases. The second part will focus on strategy and offer various options for Gassan on possible implementations of social media within their marketing strategy. The final part will be a study evaluating the practical implementation of one of the options discussed in the second part of the report. This will include the information gathered during the implementation phase, a test plan and an evaluation of the initial results.

The main research objective here is to determine the most effective social media channels. To do this the research will focus on 2 points:

Do tourists in Amsterdam use Social Media?

How do they find out about tours and points of interest in Amsterdam

The survey will be conducted over 2-3 days depending on time constraints and will aim to get at least 50 responses to be used as a representative study.

The study will focus on main tourist spots in Amsterdam including interviewing tourists present on tours at Dam Square, on canal boats and using tourist buses. This is to save time and ensure a large enough tourist group to interview in a short period of time.  Once the data has been collected it will be analzed to see if any useful patterns emerge relating to social media usage. The aim of the survey is to get a general idea of trends that are occurring.

Below is a list of questions that I will refer back to to gain a direction for the research and set a goal of what needs to be done. Main questions that need answering are:

Who are the tourists that are coming to Amsterdam?

What are their reasons for coming?

Who in this group would be influenced by Social Media?

How do they make a decision on where they spend their time on vacation trips?

What are the various mediums and tools available for online marketing?

What are other companies doing with these tools?

How can we measure the success of a social media campaign?

How can these be used in a coordinated strategy?

What are the resources needed?

How can it be improved on in the future?

Was the exercise worth the resources that were put in?

5.0 Method

5.1 Research

The initial research will take two forms. First theoretical research and background information will be collected to get an idea of the current level of understanding in the field of internet marketing using secondary sources. This will include extensive text book studies using a variety of sources, online research to find current articles and research papers dealing with the issue and also research into various case studies to get an idea of the many different approaches that have been taken to use social media. Case studies will cover various industries and not only Gassan competitors or related industry businesses. Case studies will be analysed to evaluate the methods that have been use and their degree of success using various platforms and mediums. Text books are available at the various libraries in Amsterdam and also using electronic forms available online. The rest of the secondary information is available online in business journals, blogs, news sites etc.

5.2 Data collection

The second part of the research will include primary sources by developing a survey to be distributed that will assess consumer travelling behavior and decision making.

The survey will be done using a face-to-face questionnaire consisting of 5 questions. The survey will be a descriptive study that will be used to get an idea of current social media use by tourists, in other words it will be a cross-sectional study rather than an ongoing one and is meant to be a representative study.  The reason for doing using the face-to-face method is to ensure a higher response rate. Because of personal involvement it is possible to have better quality control and to make the survey adaptable.  Speaking directly to the interviewees will allow for the possibility of feedback and rapport and will also be more likely to get an honest response by building a level of trust.

The final phase of the project is to evaluate the success of the social media campaign. This can be done using online analytics tools such as those that are available on Facebook and google and also checking the number of web hits that are gained during the implementation period. Web hits also need to be screened for new users and recurring IP addresses to determine whether visitors to the website are repeat customers or new users. Further criteria can be described to determine success over a longer time period. However this will fall out of the scope of the time available for this report.

6.0 Timescale

|  | **Task** | **Start Date** | **Completion Date** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase 1 Research & Preparation** | Literature Review + Research Proposal | 28.2.2011 | 21.03.2011 |
|  | Theoretical Research | 1.10.2010 | 01.04.2011 |
|  | Complete part 1 of report | 22.03.2011 | 10.04.2011 |
| **Phase 2 Primary Research & Report Writing** | Survey Questions | 25.03.2011 | 30.3.2011 |
|  | Finish survey | 01.04.2011 | 7.04.2011 |
|  | Analyse Results | 07.04.2011 | 09.04.2011 |
|  | Develop Social Media Strategy options | 10.04.2011 | 15.04.2011 |
|  | Complete Part 2 of report | 10.04.2011 | 15.04.2011 |
| **Phase 3 Implementation** | Implement Social Media Strategy online | 16.04.2011 | 30.04.2011 |
| **Phase 4 Evaluation** | Evaluate results of social media strategy | 30.4.2011 | 02.05.2011 |
|  | Deliver conclusions of experiment and | 03.05.2011 | 7.05.2011 |

| | alternatives | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Complete rough draft of final report | 03.05.2011 | 15.05.2011 |
| | Complete Final Report | 15.05.2011 | 20.05.2011 |

7.0 Resources

Financial

No financial resources are required for the research of this project. The research will be done using online sources and available text books and the survey will be created using free software.

The implementation of the social media plan will be done within the marketing budget of Gassan Diamonds.

Support

Support will be offered by Martine Willemsen from the Marketing and Sales department at Gassan diamonds.

Data

Data will be collected using primary sources and secondary sources. For case studies and theoretical information there is no shortage of data online and in available text books.

Equipment

Gassan Diamonds company resources can be used for the implementation of the project and the data collection after and during the campaign. Other resources needed for this project are just a working internet connection and computer.

8.0 References

The main sources I will be using include online blogs and personal websites of experts and recognized gurus of the subject such as Seth Godin, business journals including McKinsey Quarterly and The Economist, technology news websites such as TechCrunch and Mashable and also various textbooks and research papers relating to Social Media and in broader terms to Marketing. Research will also include various statistics databases such as Nederlands Bureau Voor Tourisme & Congressen and Statistics Netherlands (www.cbs.nl.)

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## Appendix V: Literature Review

## Contents

1.0 Research Issue and Working Title

The topic for my dissertation is internet marketing specifically focusing on social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The internet is a relatively new tool in marketing and is becoming increasingly important in corporate strategies. It is an extremely useful medium that allows businesses of any size from individual entrepreneurs to large corporations to reach the same target segments. The prevalence of internet usage in developed nations and growing importance in developing nations potentially makes it the most pervasive medium for future business development and customer interaction.

The growing importance of knowledge on this subject is reflected in emerging job requirements where many entry-level positions require some knowledge of social media and digital marketing techniques, especially when applying for marketing oriented jobs.

Currently for my dissertation the working research title is:

*"How to utilize and incorporate Social Media into an online marketing strategy to connect with tourists coming to Amsterdam. Case study Gassan Diamonds."*

2.0 Current Topic Discussion

The main topics that are being discussed in this research field is what really works and will it be relevant in the future. Social media is a relatively new media channel that gained credible popularity in 2007. In the previous 3 years it has grown into new proportions and is clearly an important technical development that businesses should be aware of. However the discussion going on relates to should it be used by everyone and is it worth putting resources into.

Marketing as a school of thought has not been radically changed and many of the traditional concepts are still applicable to internet marketing. Ideas need to be adapted to incorporate the internet and to utilize the internet as a powerful tool that can benefit many areas of the business and not simply as a promotional tool.

Because of the growth of the internet and the vast amount of information available shortening consumer's attention spans, the most important accomplishment of a modern marketer is to retain the repeat attention of a customer and attract a response.


3.0 Key Experts on Topic

Some of the many experts in this field include Seth Godin and Dave Chaffey who have published many books on the subject. Since the research subject still revolves around marketing and many of these principles are still valid it is important to take into consideration more traditional experts such as P. Kotler.

4.0 Theories and methodologies

One key theme that has been stressed repeatedly in current marketing books on the topic of internet marketing is the importance of building up a relationship with the customer. Businesses will have to rely on loyalty in the future and many business models are now reflecting this, placing more emphasis on loyalty programs and increasing benefits to long time customers. Seth Godin is an online marketing expert who has specialized in describing a type of marketing known as **permission marketing** to create successful business models.

The main idea behind permission marketing is that since consumers are now exposed to more than 4hrs of media per day many of the messages are just lost in the crowd. To make marketing more effective is to get the permission of the customer to market to them specifically based on their needs and the benefits offered. By gaining their permission, customers are more likely to pay attention and to respond to marketing.  Permission

marketing is an alternative to the popular **interruption marketing** method where businesses momentarily interrupt customers with a message with no interaction. Examples of interruption marketing online are pop-ups and banners. By combining the concept of permission marketing with the internet, an effective marketing campaign can be delivered to the right target segments. When the information is relevant customers will notice.

The most important goal of permission marketing is for the customer to agree to further contact. The marketing strategy stresses the benefit of the product to the customer and only asks for permission to provide further relevant information to the user. This is useful to take into consideration when designing websites and marketing campaigns. For example in the hotel industry, for frequent travelers it would be beneficial for a hotel to build up a relationship with a customer to get repeat business. For a hotel chain this may expand to long term customer loyalty extended over many regions and promoted through customer loyalty benefits. Strategies such as this are already implemented through airlines with mileage programs and also with hotels such as the Radisson SAS hotel chain.

A phenomenon that has clearly emerged in the 21$^{st}$ century is the role of online communities and social networks in the daily lives of people. Online communities such as Facebook and MySpace become increasingly popular and essential for consumers looking for information. Word of mouth marketing now more important than ever because of the potential reach of one opinion over the internet. One forum post containing a poor review of a business may potentially be spread by thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people. In the same way, good reviews and brand information may spread the same way.

Online communities should be taken into consideration when building a marketing strategy, especially if the industry caters to individual consumers. Many businesses are investing more into their online presence by setting up profiles on these social networking sites in addition to their corporate websites. This allows for further two-way communication and more customized responses to customer needs and helps to build up relationships and customer loyalty. However it is important to consider the amount of available resources and the costs of setting up a profile including the time and manpower that goes into frequently updating statuses and short news reports.


5.0 Main Sources

The main sources I will be using include online blogs and personal websites of experts and recognized gurus of the subject such as Seth Godin, business journals including McKinsey Quarterly and The Economist, technology news websites such as TechCrunch and Mashable and also various textbooks and research papers relating to Social Media and in broader terms to Marketing. Research will also include various statistics databases such as Nederlands Bureau Voor Tourisme & Congressen and Statistics Netherlands (www.cbs.nl.)

6.0 Literature Selection Criteria

The text books that I have chosen to base my research on can be categorized by their purpose and audience. Several of the books reflect are clearly aimed at a student audience

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such as the Principles of Marketing by Kotler and Principles of Direct Marketing by Alan Tapp. These books offer insights into the basic concepts necessary for understanding Internet marketing and are written from an objective point of view with the intention of outlining key concepts. Other sources of information are written from a subjective point of view relying on the author's personal experiences and observations and are presented from this 1$^{st}$ person perspective and are meant to aid in specific issues rather than give an overview of the topic. These books offer insight into the various opinions and more varied case studies involving internet marketing.

One of the main limitations regarding literature on this topic is the vast amount of information available and the rapid rate of change in this research area. The internet is constantly changing and adapting, many marketing strategies or recommendations that have come out in the last year are already dated. The technology is improving which makes it possible and necessary to improve methods of online strategy. In the last 10 years advancements in infrastructure and available technology mean mediums such as video advertisements online are being used when once they would have taken up too much bandwidth.

There are many sources that can be used for this type of research, many books have been written about the subject from various points of views regarding approaches and uses for the internet in business. These are constantly being updated with new editions. Also sources such as blogs are being published daily covering important topics related to technology advancements, marketing techniques, business models and so on. It is also important to follow news reports. Websites such as the BBC and CNN have sections that deal specifically with technology which follow developments in online business. Due to the vast amount of information on this subject I will be using certain key criteria to narrow down the list of sources. These include the publishing year, because of the nature of the internet and rapid developments any sources that have been published prior to 2007 will be considered old and irrelevant. Since the topic of research is specifically about Social media and not internet marketing as a whole I will also narrow down my search to textbooks and websites dealing specifically with this area.

For online resources such as blogs and news websites I will mainly use resources that have a wide following and established reputation to determine the validity of the information that I find. This will include finding how many times articles have been linked and recommended.

7.0 Inconsistencies in literature/ Criticisms

Despite the vast amounts of information on the subject many gaps still exist or there is no conclusive information available. Topics such as evolution of pricing mechanisms or the effect of digital channels on distribution have been discussion topics since the internet was adopted as an important medium. Looking at current business practices and experimentation being done by struggling industries such as the music and newspaper industries it is clear that there is still no definitive answer on what models work and when a model might fail.

A common limitation that is cited through sources is the lack of conclusive evidence on the success of a model or experiment. This is mainly due to the fact that the area of study is so new that the results are not in yet.

Text books focusing on a student audience have more technical details in them related to website building and applications but also more general knowledge related to marketing. Examples include Kotler's marketing textbooks and Alan Tapps books on database marketing. Other textbooks include a more professional approach aimed at existing managers which aim to explain trends and strategies in more detail.

Blogs are also another useful source of information, they have great value in bringing up-to-date information and as they are web based are also very relevant sources for information regarding digital marketing. There are some limitations in using blogs such as Techdirt and Seth Godin's blog. Blogs are mainly unstructured pieces of writing that reflect the author's opinion on different matters. The main point of a blog is to act as an opinion piece that then interacts with its community through comments. The information found in a blog is in many cases not cited properly and conclusions are directly stated without being analytically backed up. It is important to read a blog post critically and not accept information at face-value including any information found in the comments.

Further issues with the literature are differences in opinion that range from strategies to even basic concepts. Several books highlight differences of the use of definitions and terms within marketing such as differences between direct marketing and relationship marketing.

8.0 Research Methods

The research has been done in several phases over the course of the previous 7 months. To start off I did background research into the main concepts of digital and internet marketing included social media aspects. This included using books related to marketing, specifically internet marketing, that were available at the library of Metropolia Business School in Helsinki and also the Helsinki public library system. In addition to books I have used journals and articles that have been available online and blogs following technological trends.

Key words that I have been using in search engines include: social media, social media trends, technology, marketing, social networking, technology communications, tourism trends, travel networks.

Using the literature outlined in this plan I will research the subject of internet marketing and current theory and ideas that are present in this field of study. I will research traditional marketing theories and newer marketing theories related to internet marketing and also current case studies using various business models and websites to assess the practical implementation of internet marketing theory

After theoretical analysis of internet marketing strategies and theory, a comparative analysis will be done to see if any of innovative or tried methods could be applied or adapted to the client, Gassan Diamonds.  Using the literature as a framework I will build a marketing strategy with the goal of increasing customer awareness of the brand and improving the response rate based on internet bookings.

As a starting point to my research I will be using marketing theory text books such as the ones written by Philip Kotler. This graduate level marketing textbook is the most widely used marketing text book in the world and covers the main concepts of marketing. This is a good

starting reference point to research the traditional views on marketing theory and management. However limitations exist in its traditional views which may not be applicable to this research area.

Other literature sources that I will be looking at deal specifically with Digital marketing and bring another perspective to marketing that can be considered. There is a lot of information and research based analysis in these text books. One textbook I will be using was written in early 2000 and has not been updated meaning a lot of the information will be dated. Still many relevant points are brought up and the analysis can be used in hindsight to see whether trends that were identified 10 years ago are still relevant.

9.0 Link to Research Proposal

The topics discussed here cover the basics of theory and the key debate that is going on related to internet marketing and social media. Using these ideas I will research further how to practically implement a social media strategy for the client.

In addition to marketing theory and media trends research still needs to be done to find out more about consumer trends and consumer decision making behavior. This will include a survey to find out what channels consumers use to book trips and tours to  Amsterdam and what their decision making process is to pick tourist destinations.

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