Five golden recommendations for social media practices in trade media marketing

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Abstract

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How to combine traditional marketing and social media marketing most effectively? The research question is based on the objective to find the best social media practices for trade media marketing to achieve high outreach and visibility for press releases. The purposes of the thesis are assisting professionals in finding modern approaches for trade media marketing, combining social media marketing and trade media marketing, and lastly recommending effective social media practices for trade media marketing. The objectives aim to achieve the most efficient experience and outcome for press releases, as well as drive and increase the successful results on digital platforms for company professionals, who distribute news, and editors, who publish news. The objectives of the thesis are to create a strong and effective co-existence of long well-written press releases in web and print media, combined with its visualized social media version. It aims and targets professionals with a combination of social media marketing and trade media marketing. Also, it aims to boost the presence of press releases on social media to achieve maximum outreach and visibility. The theoretical framework dives into the strong influence of word-of-mouth marketing for press releases and shows how to use it most effectively as an advantage for businesses and organizations based on current literature. Moreover, it defines target groups, shows opportunities, channels, press release composition and challenges. In addition, a glossary with definition of terms is included. The theoretical framework contains the key concepts: social media marketing, social media news releases, differences between SMNR and press releases, the TARES Ethics Model, word-of-mouth marketing and lastly press releases and their purpose. The outcome of the research is based on a qualitative research, which includes the experiences, pain points and opinions of eight highly experienced professionals and business students. To get a valuable insight into the prior experiences of professional in trade media and press releases, the qualitative research was conducted in form of interviews during the end of January and beginning of February 2021. and open conversations according to investigative questions. The interviews focussed on professional background, information retrieval, prior experience with press releases, opportunities of social media practices, and the impact of social media features. Insights into their work experience and pain points are offered, where also direct quotes and tone-of-voice are analysed. Finally, the result of the research is the five golden recommendation for social media practices that are included in the reflection: mobile optimization, the focus on online presence, channel suggestions, the usage of social media features, and word-of-mouth marketing. The overall goal is to evaluate and utilize social media, its platforms, and features, in the most effective way. These recommendations are meant to lead or inspired by professionals who work with press releases. The goal is to achieve maximum visibility and outreach for product news and press releases online based on the research's outcome and results.
Keywords Social Media Practices; Trade Media Marketing; Press Releases; Product News; Social Media Marketing; Word-of-mouth marketing

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1 Introduction

In a fast and ever-changing world driven by digitalization, social media marketing is a strong preference of many marketing professionals. Are trade medias and press releases still valuable marketing assets these days to give industry-specific product news the visibility and attention they deserve? Press releases will always be valuable for industrial companies to reach their target readership and audience in trade media journals with product-oriented news, but the combination of trade media marketing and social media marketing is a new marketing area to explore for many professionals.

1.1 Background

Nowadays companies, regardless of their internationality and size, value good public relations and published articles about their operations, new innovations, or certifications. A press release is a very valuable way of marketing and advertising since it leaves a long-lasting impression in journals and magazines for many readers. Press releases are valued by professionals especially for their neutrality and credibility if they are well produced and launched. In figure 1, it is shown that professionals, who are purchase and responsible for major investments, spend an average of one working day, equally to 8 hours, a month reading trade medias (Deutsche Fachpresse 2017).
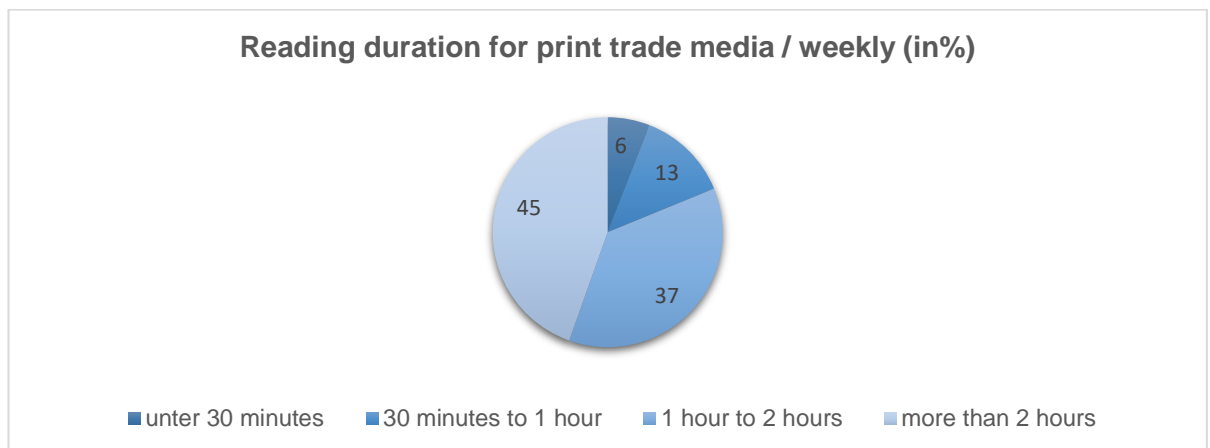
Figure 1. Reading duration for print trade media / weekly (in%). (Adapted from Deutsche Fachpresse 2017)

Since digitalization is a rising trend, it is essential to have a modern approach to successfully compete in this field of marketing. Many companies value social media marketing in their marketing mix. Press releases are a very traditional form of marketing, published in trade media magazines, but it has a lot of potential when considering the impact of digitalization and preferences towards social media marketing approaches. Realizing and adapting changes and trends early to act accordingly by for instance introducing mobile optimization

in templates, personal networking with magazines and editors on trade media and following up the published social media posts are only three important points to consider for a successful press release campaign.

I have a personal interest in this topic because of my prior work experience in this field and own opinions and ideas to improve trade media and press release marketing according to the ongoing digitalization and preferences towards social media marketing. Based on university course knowledge in digital marketing, as well as social media marketing and supported by skills learned from the internship at a press release agency, I got inspired to conduct my thesis research to get a deeper insight into social media marketing and trade media marketing and to find ways and recommendation to combine both marketing methods the most effectively.

Since there is no commissioning company involved, I do a general research on the thesis topic. There are no other parties, like stakeholders, who benefit from this thesis directly or are namely included in the process of research. Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, as an indirect party, as well as companies, professionals, editors, or distribution services for press releases will benefit from this research as soon as they get aware of it or search for the work, as well as consider the implementation of the recommendations.

From the research on trade media marketing and its effective combination with social media marketing, not only recommendations can result, but also another point of view can be created for professionals to see the true value of both marketing approaches, as well as motivations to conduct further research. The recommendations are very customizable for marketing departments. Moreover, it can lead to a whole new perception of trade media marketing and openness to experiment in this field of marketing when seeing the practices effectively supporting the operation of a business.

My professional and educational development will as well benefit from this thesis research for coming master studies and future employment after graduation in the field of marketing. Showcasing the ability to think out of the box and combine traditional and modern marketing approaches to give recommendation and tips to companies is a very valuable concept and project that will have long-lasting impacts. This way I create new ideas for companies on how to improve existing strategies to ensure and enable neutral and credible product news that have a serious impact and outreach on social media platforms. My future studies will focus on the development of content and copywriting skills for marketing purposes on digital and social media platforms based on recommendation made in this thesis, as well as gain-

ing deeper insights into organizational communication and marketing strategies. Considering my professional development and future employment, this research is a demonstration of a wide skills set, creative thinking and deep knowledge to a possible employer.

1.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this thesis is to assist marketing professionals in companies, editors of trade journals, and press release distribution services to implement modern approaches in press release and trade media marketing. The aim and objectives are to give professionals practices on a combination of trends and preferences in both social media marketing and trade media marketing and to find common recommendation for professionals to have the most effective experience and outcome for traditional trade media marketing on digital platforms these days. These recommendation and practices are based on a thorough research including literature and interviews, to include the visions, preferences, and ideas of current professionals and to offer solutions to current needs and pain points.

Figure 2. Three main purposes

To summarize, my main purposes are, as they are presented in figure 2, assisting professionals in finding modern approaches for trade media marketing, combining social media marketing and trade media marketing, as well as finding recommendations on effective social media practices for trade media marketing.

The objectives of the thesis are to recommend practices for social media news releases based on the analysis of expert opinions and preferences on the investigative questions and to combine trade media and social media for the benefit of industrial news and press releases of companies, as well as supporting factors that boost press releases on social media platforms. The research will show suitable practices for press releases in trade media marketing on social media to reach the desired target audience with maximum visibility, as

well as outreach. The thesis itself is targeted to business professionals, marketing, and communication professionals, as well as trade media professionals, such as journalists and editors and aims to give valuable support and inspiration for the effective and successful implementation.

My work experience showed that instead of trade media marketing, many executives value social media marketing. So, combining press release content and social media marketing approaches and platforms, offers a whole new world for companies and professionals to experience credible and neutral products news on desired channels. So, another objective is to find suitable combinations of both marketing approaches which will achieve successful and effective results as well as a popular status among professionals working with press releases.

I decided to limit the thesis to social media platforms LinkedIn, and Twitter in the theoretical framework, as well as trade media journals, online and in print. The limitations of this thesis are towards social media marketing and trade media marketing as the only two marketing forms that are researched. Reasons behind my choices are that companies focus on international campaigns on social media rather than traditional forms of marketing. Social media as a tool is inexpensive and allows a rapid growth, outreach, and possibility for viral posting based on word-of-mouth-marketing, while printed and older media channels are losing importance.

The thesis is not demographically limited since press releases are often internationally distributed and translated into multiple languages by companies, distributors or even editors themselves. For the research, the interviewees where mostly based in Germany and Finland with often very international work experiences and targets to reach audiences outside of their home country.

In total, the thesis is based on the qualitative interview research, discovering experiences of marketing and communication professionals, and business students regarding social media practices for trade media marketing and press releases, as well as the analysis and recommendations from the interviews as the result.

1.3   Thesis type and method

The thesis type is research-oriented to investigate the research question based on literature and qualitative interviews with an international focus group of marketing and communication professionals, trade media professionals and business students.

The implemented research methods are literature to support the framework as well as qualitative research, in form of interviews with professionals and business student. The structured qualitative interviews were chosen to ensure a detailed insight into the experiences, opinions, and improvement ideas of the interviewees. The chosen research methods will be presented in more detail in the methodology and empirical part of this thesis chapter of this thesis.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis structure starts with an introduction that includes background information and explanations of the topic, as well as objectives, limitations benefits, thesis type and research question, and lastly insights into key concepts and a risk analysis.

The theoretical framework presents a closer insight into theories regarding the research topic and includes important definitions of vocabulary as well as demonstrates key ideas. The methodology in chapter 3 gives an insight into the research conduction, materials, and interviews, as well as steps taken to reach the outcome of the thesis. Chapter 4 includes the results, which are based on the investigative questions (IQ's) of the qualitative research interview and described with their effect and benefits for implementation and usage. And finally, the results in chapter 5 present my reflection on the thesis' validity, reliability, limitations, learning process, future research ideas and recommendations for trade media and social media marketing professionals.

1.5 Research question

The research is made to find out what is the most effective combination and implementation of social media marketing and trade media marketing for company's press release. Therefore, it is important to understand that for every company or press release it is essential to have the right trade media contacts, as well as channels, templates, attachments, and requirements towards the publications.

RQ: What are the most effective social media practices for trade media marketing to achieve a high outreach and visible for industrial and product news, such as press releases?

The interview questions are as follows:

IQ 1: What is the professional background and what are the preferred mediums, sources to retrieve information a personal objectives, goals, and challenges?

IQ 2: What prior experiences with product news and press release can be recorded and how would the interviewee evaluate the importance and influence of trade media marketing?

IQ 3: What opportunities can be seen from social media practices for trade media marketing and the influence word of mouth marketing? How often are trade media read on social media and taken into consideration for purchases?

IQ 4: What factors are important for social media practices in trade media marketing, what are benefits and can trade media marketing survive without social media marketing approaches?

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2   The combination of social media and trade media marketing

Press releases in trade media are high-valued forms of advertisement that editors and readership appreciate for the neutrality and credibility of their information. This form of advertisement brings credibility and trustworthiness to the products and company behind it since professional and popular trade media do select the articles they publish very wisely.

In this subchapter the theoretical framework of the thesis is explained, and vocabulary and concepts defined, as well as research on word-of-mouth marketing, channels, opportunities, and challenges are presented. Additionally, press release composition and its value are illustrated.

The theoretical framework for the concept of developing social media practices for trade media regarding press and product releases is rapidly following the trend of digitalization. While traditional press releases are launched and distributed to editors worldwide with the goal be printed for the readership's perception, today's technology and trends offers a whole new level of product news and press release distribution:

2.1   Theory of trade media and social media practices

Today's technologies include the fast-growing social networks and medias that took over lives and information channels in a fast paste. Most business professionals and students use social networks nowadays to connect with each other and receive updates and information on the most current and relevant topics in the world and within their circles.

But what are social networks?

Social Media is defined as a computer-based technology that eases to share ideas, opinions, and information through a virtual platform or community. Social media is an online network that allows electronic communication and distribution of content, like personal information, files, videos, and images. The devices used to engage and participate on social media platforms are computer, tablets, or smartphone, but also other web-based software or applications that can be used for messaging. (Dollarhide 2020.)

This computer-based technology makes it possible to follow content, like news and information in real-time and to maintain messaging relationships over distance in form of texting and posting of videos, pictures, and articles.

The trend to use social media as a company is progressing as a revolution in customer experience, employer branding and client relationships by active online support and marketing approaches on social media towards their targeted audiences and utilizing the networks as a place to start a meaningful conversation. Therefore, engagement of different generations can be achieved by using different social media channels to maintain a strong customer and client relationships and conversations.

How to define social media marketing?

Social media marketing, short SMM, is used to market and promote products and services offered by companies online, on social media platforms, websites, and networks. Social Media marketing offers to reach new customers, engage with existing customers, and promote desired values of a product or brand, such as culture, mission, vision, or tone. (Hayes 2018.)

Social Media is a very popular marketing approach among companies these days. There are three Golden Rules on Social Media for public relations and marketing communication that can be seen in figure 3 below:

Figure 3. Golden Rules on Social media for public relations and marketing communication. (Adapted from Kim 2016, 116-117)

What is trade media?

Trade media are the magazines and websites targeted to specific industry audiences and readerships, meaning its professionals and employers. According to professionals they are one of the most valued sources for neutral and credible information during the purchasing process and the average of industry professionals and leaders spend around one monthly working day to read and analyse trade media press releases. (Deutsche Fachpresse 2017.)

For trade media press releases the standard outreach and readership is achieved by publications in trade media magazines and journals, but nowadays trade media also established successful social media channels for their audience with frequent and loyal readers

where they share content pieces and teasers of news from their magazine content, including press release news they received from companies or agencies. Since most magazines are under a paid subscription, social media as a free platform often includes a higher number of additional readers compared to the magazine's readership.

Press releases are written communication that reports specific but brief information about events, circumstances, product launches or other happenings. Typically, it is tied to a business or organization and distributed to media for achieve publications. (Wolfe 2021.) According to Oxford Academic (2021),

> "a press release is a document that is sent to the media highlighting a new story or research that could make a good news article. The press release will contain the main highlights and findings of the journal article. Usually, a release will be around 500-600 words long, including a quote from the author and a link to the journal article. The press should grab a journalist's attention and provide succinct facts to shape a story. The aim of the press release is to gain coverage for the journal and the author of the article."

The implementation of press and news releases on social media platform, called Social Media News Releases, indicates the need for common practices to ensure its efficient use. These needs are portrayed in the research question and key concept for this research-based thesis. According to the definition, a Social Media News Release, shortened SMNR, "is a press release format designed for the online media world". (Realwire 2021.)

The content of a SMNR can either be produced in the traditional style of a press release or simply feature the core elements and statements of the news release. It also can be branded by a company and include images, audio, and video on social media channels, plus links to relevant websites. (Realwire 2021.)

What is the difference between traditional press releases and social media news releases?

Social media news releases are growing trends and names in business and industries. There are not many differences between press releases and social media news releases. The difference is defined mostly in three characteristics: audience, style, and the technology. (Santoro 2021.)

The audience has a large growth from subscription readers to social media followers and therefore, also attracts and converts to a rise in subscription from interested social media

followers. The style only offers many opportunities for businesses by using features available in social media, from text to audio and video releases, live videos about releases, and many more possibilities to promote content, which is all made possible by the new and rising technologies and updates on social media daily.

2.2 Terms related to social media and trade media

The following terms with its given definition have been chosen in relation to trade media and social media for the purpose of understanding and explaining the importance and utilization in combination of both prior terms.

B2B Advertisement

According to Investopedia, B2B Advertisement includes any marketing efforts that targets other businesses rather than individual customers. This form of advertisement takes place between companies and can involve promotions of products such as office supplies, product parts and services, such as HR or logistics designed for businesses. The aim is to reach the employees of a business that oversee purchasing decisions and purchasing and investment decisions. It is important to know the correct audience, craft strong message and build digital and SEO strategies. (Kenton 2020.)

When planning an advertisement, it is important to follow these four steps of "AIDA" (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action). (Heinze, Fletcher, Rashid & al 2020, 169-170.)
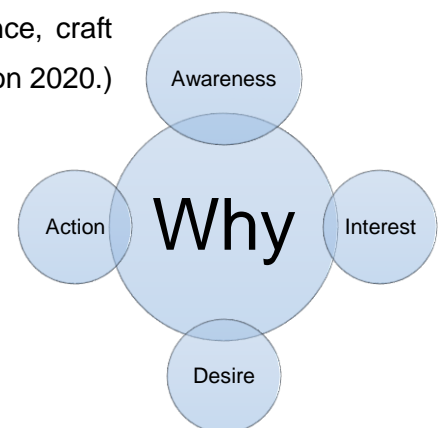
Figure 4. Graphic "AIDA and Why"

Furthermore, asking yourself WHY customers should buy the product or service is essential for advertisement creation. In figure 4, it can be seen how AIDA connects with WHY question in the centre.

In trade media advertisement from companies usually must be paid in relation to size or page that it fills in the issue or on the website. They normally contain images and contact info, as well as brief details about the product or service, while press releases in trade media not necessarily have to be paid, it depends on the editorial team's decision. Their content is a more precise, neutral, and product-specific form of advertisement, that also represents the company in more detail to a professional audience.

Publication

According to Merriam-Webster, an online dictionary, a publication either the act or process of publishing or a published work. The word "published" therefore means, that a piece of information has been produced or released for distribution a book, magazine, or newspaper, etc. (Merriam-Webster 2021.)

Editors

"An editor is a person who is in charge of newspaper or magazine and who decides what will be published in each edition" and "An editor is a journalist who is responsible for a particular section of a newspaper" (Collins Dictionary 2021.)

Press release distribution service

"Press release distribution services are tools that allow you to send press releases to a large, targeted audience of journalists, social networks, bloggers, influencers, and traditional or digital media outlets, either automatically or manually" (Donda 2021). PRDS are not only available as online tools, but also exist as real PR agencies where professionals assist press releases on every step of its way – from writing suggestions, translation to the actual distribution. They own big databases of media contacts. Other tasks can be, depending on the service, follow-up on press releases and success reporting.

Readership

Readership is the mass or a particular group of readers. It can be referred to as a magazine's readership. (Merriam-Webster 2021.) According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the readership describes a group of people who regularly read a particular magazine, newspaper, or website. (Cambridge Dictionary 2021.)

Media kits

According to Marketingterms.com, a media kit is defined as "a resource created by a publisher to help prospective ad buyers evaluate advertising opportunities".

Furthermore, the source specifies that the term as followed:

> "Media kits often contain information about rates, ad sizes and formats, targeting options, audience profiles, case studies, contact information, plus anything else that helps buyers make informed decisions. There are no static rules, and media kits vary greatly. However, they all share a common goal; to give prospective advertising buyers every reason and opportunity to make contact." (Marketingterms 2021.)

Paid Advertisement

According to Skyword (2014) the term is defined as followed:

> "With paid advertising, marketers pay the owner of ad space in exchange for use of that space. The price paid for the ad space is often settled through a bidding process between marketers and the ad space owner. There are several categories, including pay-per-click (PPC), pay-per-impression (PPI), and display ads."

2.3 Social media channels

The social media channels chosen for the framework of this thesis are LinkedIn and Twitter since those are professional networks or journalist networks, where press releases have been mostly shared and communicated in the recent past.

"LinkedIn is known as the professional social network. It has been called Facebook with suit and tie and Twitter on its best behaviour. It is also the place business-to-business (B2B) marketers gain most leads" (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 97.)

LinkedIn offers a wide readership of industry professional looking for product-, company- or service-related information for or during a purchasing process. Targeting the audience in LinkedIn with press release information in groups or feed, as well as connections between editors and press release distribution services are of great benefit in this network. On LinkedIn, it is possible to share product news and press release content in form of for instance articles, blog posts, videos as well as pictures that can be shared, liked, and commented on. With sharing and commenting it is possible to exchange the news within connections, groups, and feeds and therefore, higher the readership count.

According to Bodnar and Cohen, LinkedIn proved itself to not only drive leads, but converts existing leads successfully to customers. LinkedIn is a powerful tool for marketing and sales that offers opportunities for prequalified, inbound leads. (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 97.)

Twitter, as the second chosen social media channel, is very popular within journalists and editors online.

"Even though Twitter started as a status update service, it quickly became much more … Marketing superstars understand the power of sharing, which is where Twitter excels. They also understand the idea of keeping it simple." (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 109.)

Many editors and companies use Twitter actively to provide their followers with updates and news about their work and products, with links to their blogs and website to follow. They

share product news and other content from their magazine with their professional followers in from of short message news in their feed.

On Twitter, short messages of up to 280 characters can be shared to the followers, who can like, comment, and retweet those postings. This as well enlarges the count of readership from the normal follower amount and helps can more followers and awareness. Furthermore, videos and photos can be shared on this platform as well.

According to Bodnar and Cohen, benefits of Twitter are the search engine optimization, content generation engine, research tool, word-of-mouth and pass along, as well as PR gravity. For B2B leads Twitter offers many tools that help to find possible prospects based on publicly provided information in tweets. (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 110-115.)

In those medias sharing, retweeting, liking, and commenting support the trade medias post and leads therefore traffic first to their website and redirect to contacts and website of the product. It is very likely that professionals with an interest on the article also go further in the purchasing process by clicking backlinks to the product or service provider who is behind the press release.

2.4   Press release composition and value

According to Comcowich (2016), press release communication and marketing is valuable media relations and communications strategy among PR professionals. Well-produced news releases are being published in form of articles, inspired by the news releases from a company. They get then picked up by more medias. The key is to produce effective news for distributions to media outlets.

Effective press releases and how to write them:
- Use news releases appropriately.
- Explain why it matters.
- Narrow your media list.
- Consider writing in the first person in the voice of the spokesperson.
- Cite facts.
- Get the basics right.
- Use a media monitoring service.
- Bottom Line.
(Comcowich 2016.)

According to PREVIEW (2021), "the key to success of any press release lies with content's ability to grab the reader's attention, each and every time."

Seven key elements that press releases need to include are therefore:

- Headline
- Dateline
- Introduction
- Body
- Boilerplate
- Call To Action
- Media Contact Details

(PREVIEW / Newsvoir 2021.)

According to Carolyn Mae Kim's book "Social Media Campaigns – Strategies for Public Relations and Marketing" (2016) nowadays the need for strong writing on Social Media is sometimes overlooked and replaced by the illusion that well-written pieces are not as crucial. But this is far from the truth according to the author.

An approach to create good social media content is from Mark Schaefer (2012), who uses RITE (Relevant, Interesting, Timely, and Entertaining). But in the end, engaging communication is what matters. (Kim 2016, 92.)

According to Baker and Martinson (2001), the TARES Ethics Model introduces five principles that leads communication behavior:

- Truthfulness of the message
- Authenticity of the organization
- Respect for the people being communicated with
- Equity of the message
- Social responsibility

(Kim 2016, 82.)

This model can be considered as an essential guideline for communication efforts and behavior in public relations, as well as marketing. It also includes the main concepts for writing a credible news release very precisely. So, the TARES Ethics Model is a valuable source to lead professionals in planning and creating campaigns and names aspect to carefully consider when it comes to communication and representation of brands and companies, as well as their products.

2.5 Target groups of press releases

Press releases are targeted towards industrial audiences and readerships, including professionals and executives involved in purchasing processes, who are searching for credible and trustworthy information for large investments. Trade medias have the reputation to deliver the most credible news, so according to recent statistics professionals spend an average of eight hours per month reading and analysing trade medias for their needs and purpose.
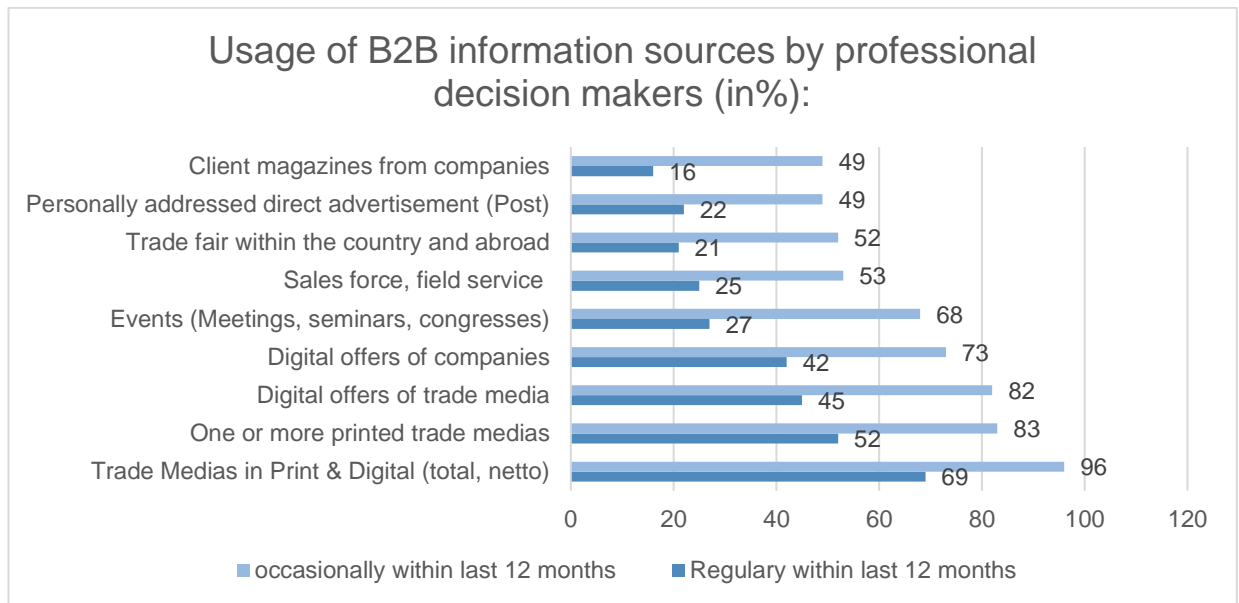
Figure 5. Usage of B2B information sources by professional decision makers (in%). (Adapted from Deutsche Fachpresse 2017)

As it is shown in figure 5 press releases in print or digital are the most used and trusted B2B information source by professional decision makers. Needs of professionals, who read press releases are easy and trustworthy information retrieval on regularly used channels with guarantee to find credible and neutral product information to save time and money. Moreover, they look for expert insight and opinion, as well as support during the purchasing process.

Another target group to take into consideration when thinking about press releases are editors of trade media journals. The aim is to attract by the content and visuals. Since editors receive a high number of releases daily, it is important target editor's interest and preferences in templates and mailing to achieve a good number of publications in global medias. Therefore, it is mandatory to maintain a professional image and relevant keywords that show the meaningfulness and importance just by scanning the mailbox.

Important factors to consider when addressing an editor to publish a press release:
- Subject line of the press release mailing
- Layout of the press release template (Mobile optimization)
- Credibility of the agency
- Prior contacts and publications with the agency or company
- Topic of the release and its relevance

In general, it can be said, that receiving releases relieves the trade media editor's workload of writing new article and content pieces. Also, press releases give inspiration to write new articles about recent launches. Most editors are publishing press releases free of charge,

although some also charge large amounts of money for visibility in their magazines like advertisement. But press releases must be differentiated from standard advertisement in marketing, since traditional press releases appear more like high quality articles.

2.6 Influence of word-of-mouth marketing

"Today, listening to these young customers, understanding how they are fitting your brand into their lives and lifestyles and adding to conversations by offering services and content that is relevant and helpful to them is crucial" (Van den Bergh & Behrer 2013, 48.)

Word-of-mouth marketing is an essential part of social media marketing. Users talk not only in daily conversations in person about findings from social media, save posts and show them to friends with active recommendations, but share, like, tag and comment postings to let friends know about events and services that awakes their interest online. This leads to an online conversation and promotes the posts, as well as gives increased visibility by appearing in more and more news feeds.

This word-of-mouth recommendation have a powerful effect on purchase preferences of especially young adults. (Van den Bergh & Behrer 2013, 48.)

According to Investopedia, word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most impactful ways of advertising because 92% of consumers trust friends more than traditional news. Moreover, WOM marketing can be stimulated by good customer service, a product or giving unique insights and information. (Kenton 2020.)

Paid Advertisement on social media platforms can always be used to increase the visibility and boost posts to create viral effects.

2.7 Opportunities of social media practices

> "A social media press release isn't all that different from a traditional online release, but there are some differences you should pay attention to. With the addition of images, videos, and other multimedia formats, a social media press release is simply one that you distribute via social networks, along with the more traditional online wire services." (Thompson 2015.)

According to Thompson, benefits are publicity and getting into Google News, trust, and branding, as well as driving and tracking traffic. The news releases receive instantly visibility and publicity and can get into the Google News which gives a high level of brand recognition and traffic. Furthermore, it creates trust among customers and shows transparency of the

business or organization. In addition, an important benefit is that social media news releases drive traffic to the website. (Thompson 2015.)

The benefit of social media is that professionals even get alerted of recent postings if they follow trade medias or companies. Those posts can awake interest and lead on a purchasing process by following links. With social media channels publishing press releases, the awareness of the detailed and credible product information increases massively in the readership count. The access to product information therefore is eased on social platforms, since everyone can access it easily from a device such as smartphone, tablet, or computer, which is from a big importance in B2B sales that becomes digitalized in fast paste.

From my internship experience, I got to know all three perspectives of press release distribution, including company's requirements, agency's work processes and editorial requirements. One of the most frequent questions of customers has been if the distribution service is also expert in social media marketing. Many customers are valuing social media marketing over traditional press release marketing. With my influences during the internship, the follow-up routines started to include social media publications of press releases which benefitted their work results and reputation towards the customers. With the correct practices the impact of a well-written and distributed press releases can reach an extremely larger audience by becoming more visible and awareness-bringing then a tradition online or print publication. Due to the features like sharing via direct messages or in feeds or groups, as well as commenting and tagging friends, colleagues and connections under posts, a post is widely spread and shared, and a conversation starts.

Functions like hashtags and tagging of other accounts in a post can enlarge the readership and visibility count of the post. There are big opportunities for trade media in knowing the right practices when using hashtags in social media for their posts and content that targets their main audience and the exact content. A conversation about the products and its release can take place in the comment section under the social media post, where questions can be answered by company, editors, and distributors in real time. This is also a big chance for customer service to be active in answering to interested customers and representing the brand.

Moreover, the editor's workload benefits from receiving and using credible press releases. Instead of researching and writing about a topic to fill empty pages or the daily online news feed of a trade media on social media platforms, they can provide interesting content without extra work about credible information about products or companies. By sharing those as teasers on social media, they can benefit by finding new professional readers for their magazines with interest in purchasing subscription to see more news and full articles.

So, not only the company that issued the press release is benefitting but also the trade media by gaining more visibility in feeds and within communities.

2.8   Challenges of social media practices

One major challenge is that since social media is active twenty-four-seven, it is important to be aware of challenges and possible crises at all time when using social media practices for press releases.

"A crisis, by its very nature, is substantial. It is an event or the perception of an event, that damages the relationship between a brand and the public…" (Kim 2016, 135.)

It is mandatory to be aware of a crisis, such as unhappy customers, negative comments under news and miscommunication, that can occur at any time. Therefore, it is important to have a crisis management plan ready to avoid or limit constant damage to brand and company reputation. A focus in the plan must be on controlling the crisis. The following 9 steps crisis management plan is a simple way to get ahead of an unpleasant situation online:

- Define what a "Crisis" could be to your brand.
- Identify your key message.
- Draft your communication guidelines.
- Use a listening tool.
- Communicate Internally.
- Stop all social media schedules.
- Publicly acknowledge the problem.
- Empathize but keep your distance.
- Assess the impact of the crisis on your brand.

(The App Concept 2020.)

Content on social media therefore needs to be well-considered in their communication and visuals that present the brand or company. A guideline for marketers and communication experts working on advertisement is to follow standards, regulations, and laws, like for instance the ICC Marketing Code by the International Chamber of Commerce, which is considered the "The Code is the backbone of the global advertising and marketing industry." (ICC International Chamber of Commerce 2021.)

According to Thompson (2015), challenges for social media news releases are that outreach to certain users may be lost. This means that not every person is using social media platforms actively, especially when the targeted prospects are above 50 years old. Another challenge is that it is time consuming and very technical. Writing a good press release takes a lot of time and knowledge about concise informative communication and industries. And

lastly, there is a high level of competition since journalists receive press releases, including social media news releases by thousands. Getting attention for a news release is demanding if a company or professional does not have media contacts.

Other challenges to be mentioned can be following of trends when creating fresh visuals for postings or text, as well as the sense of humour and current controversial topics online that can be misunderstood and lead to a controversy. Social media makes it easy to anonymously write negative comments.

Also, it is important to be aware of fake accounts and bots that can take an influence on functions like liking and commenting under posts.

3   Empirical part and methodology

The applied methodology will be explained and justified with research purpose and research approach. Also, decisions on for example data collection and a following presentation of the analysing process will be defined closer and included.

3.1   Research conduction and outcome

The research idea is based on prior work experience with press releases and trade media for which the author sees a big potential on social media platforms. After further research, more information on available methods came up to consider for her research and the work routine to follow up social media news releases from trade journals was initiated.

The research is made to support marketing professionals in the future with recommendation on how to use trade media marketing on social media platforms most effectively and give them a lead on what to consider as essential when planning such a campaign for their company and brand. Moreover, based on the interview analysis and recommendation, give them a credible insight into the interviewee's challenges, objectives and experiences based on their answers and the conversation during the interview. Many benefits can be achieved by including social media marketing. So, sharing, liking, and editing functions from social media platforms, as well as the subscription free access to content, widens the audience and lifts the visibility of press release content.

Essential for the research outcome are credibility of the recommendations and insights, effectivity that boosts the campaign success by integrating another platform than traditional trade magazines and lastly benefits of wider audience, as well as visibility and easy sharing functions among users.

To conclude, the research is purely based on retrieving information about press releases and social media practices, from material to qualitative interview research, to give effective recommendation and give a guideline for professionals with an interest in planning and executing trade media marketing and press release campaigns.

The practices and recommendations are based on organic social media use. Paid Advertisement on social media can always be considered to boost the impact of posts and to create a viral effect.

3.2   Research method approach

For marketing research, there are two potential research methods that can be applied: qualitative and quantitative.

Quantitative and qualitative research differ in many ways. While quantitative research has a linear process, qualitative research has a very iterative and inductive process. (Emerald Group Publishing. 2021.)

"Quantitative research is defined as a systematic investigation of phenomena by gathering quantifiable data and performing statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques." (Question Pro. 2021.) It is used according to collected numbers and sampling method to predict the future. For this thesis, it has not been chosen because of the missing conversation and the limited experience sharing opportunity. An example of a quantitative research is a survey, where limited space to write short opinions and ranking lead to result. There is no contact or communication between respondent and survey provider and due to its often-anonymous character it is hard to trace down and communicate with respondents about their opinion.

The main argument for choosing a qualitative research approach for data collection has been that "qualitative research is defined as a market research method that focuses on obtaining data through open-ended and conversational communication." (Question Pro. 2021.) Qualitative research in form of interviews allows to take observation, like tone-of-voice, body language and real reactions into account when analysing the collected data. Furthermore, the opportunity and length of answer is unlimited, and many thoughts, experiences, opinions, and topics can be discussed between interviewer and interviewee that would not come up then answering a strict and short survey. Especially for final recommendation on social media practices, it is important to get to know needs and pains of professionals to improve and develop practices accordingly to have a vivid exchange about current pain points and ideas.

3.3   Data collection method

In this subchapter, a closer insight into the planning of the qualitative research is given. Beginning with a presentation of the development and creation of questions for the qualitative interviews, a conducted pilot study is explained. Also, material that has been used for the qualitative interviews, interview methods and focus group differences will be presented and justified by the given steps of the data collection time frame.

3.3.1 Pilot study

A pilot study for a thesis is a very common procedure that is also used for presentations or publications. The pilot person tests the performance and understanding and gives the writer or interviewer the opportunity to see a test run of the interview. That way, I can find flaws or miscommunications, like for instance poor formulations of questions. For this reason, test interviews were conducted during the process of writing and finding the right set of questions for the interviewees within my university environment. The pilot group consisted of peers that agreed to have virtual meet ups on regular basis.

In the beginning, I asked friends and colleagues randomly in messages or virtual meet-ups questions related to my thesis topics and noted down their answers as a part of my pilot research. Those were very basic questions about personal opinions or experience often related to current news releases that I found traditionally or on social media platforms. In those first questionings of peers, the focus and objective laid more on the improvement of questions rather than analysing the quality of the answer.

After the questionnaire was ready, a whole interview was simulated with two peers as a final check on communication and formulation. Additionally, these mock interviews gave insights into possible length of the interview and allowed practicing the hosting skills for an interview. The students were from the same degree program, one from the same specialization with a strong background in marketing and the other one specialized in the field of "meeting industry" but worked with me at the same internship company, so she had a background knowledge in press releases and trade media. At the end of the pilot interviews, I collected feedback one last time on my qualitative research questions and my abilities to host the interviews. For my pilot interviews, my criteria were finding peers and friends that have a background knowledge in marketing, since those professionals would be my key audience for the real interviews. It was important that professionals from that background easily understand the questions and were able to answer.

The feedback I received was that some questions were very similar or difficult to answer without background information, especially for students in the beginning phase of their career. Another valuable point was to shorten and keep the questions general and open for interpretations from each field. There were too many questions and additional questions per field, which the I then removed from my list since most of them were naturally included into other questions as follow-ups. The positive feedback for the pilot interviews was always having an explanation or help to guide interviewees prepared based on my internship knowledge, further explained in 3.3.2.

3.3.2   Internship experience

During my study-related internship, I have been working in a small agency that handles press releases for client companies from planning, content creation, copywriting, and translations to publication, as well as follow-up reporting. While working on the given tasks to support the press release campaign management, I found out that many editors published the agency's content also on their social media accounts creating backlinks to web articles or blogs. After presenting my findings and ideas to the project managers, I started following up those entries to the company's database as valuable visibility for the client's campaign. From this experience and findings, I selected my thesis topic and began collecting first ideas for my thesis about target personas and social media platforms.

With my educational background in marketing, internship work experience and creativity in this field to embrace modern ideas and conduct an independent research, supported by a qualitative research in form of interviews with a considered and tested set of questions, I was always able to help with explanations and descriptions based on my own experience and knew exactly what answers I need and how to lead interviewees. With this background information and storytelling, an atmosphere of trust was created where interviewees freely talk about own experiences. So, the interview turned into a casual conversation in which the questions of my qualitative research have been fully answered in every detail.

3.3.3   Interview method

For this research, professional background, and education, as well as interests have a big influence on professional's preferences and behaviour and therefore answers and reactions to questions. Data from the interviews is collected with different methods on the following topics and themes of the interview:

- Development of Press Releases
- Findings on Platforms
- Findings on Opportunities
- Findings on supporting factors
- WOM marketing influence
- Effective Integration of press releases and trade media on social media
- Findings on challenges

The interviews were conducted from end of January to beginning of February 2021.

The first sources to collect data are the exact answers that are given during the interview. Since interviewees expect the answers to be main content to be analysed, they will choose their words very carefully and precisely. Miscommunication can still be possible, but then

later it will be clarified by additional follow-up questions to ensure correct use of interviewee data.

Another source of data will be based on observations. Based on tone-of-voice, hesitation, or even deeper questions to the interviewees, many observations on interest, familiarity and general opinion can be taken. The interviewees are not told beforehand that this data will be collected and analysed as well, since that would falsify the real reactions by overthinking their tone-of-voice and feelings.

The interviews have been recorded with the permission of all interviewees. The interviews have been taken in person, as well as in virtual meet ups. So, recording have been made either with a smartphone or a meeting recording in Zoom or Teams. The virtual meetings were conducted without the use of the camera. But generally, observations were noted on a paper during the interviews mostly focussing on tone-of-voice and feelings shown towards a certain question and topic. Each interview was first designed to take up to 30 minutes but after conduction pilot studies and then interviewing the real focus group, an interview took between 15 and 25 minutes depending on the interviewee's answers. The interviewees were able to express themselves and their opinion on every asked question freely.

The relevant data taken from the interview session was transcribed during the same day considering the importance of memorizing why certain moments of the interview were essential for this thesis. There were no second interviews done, neither were questions send to interviewees beforehand to see their unprepared true and honest reaction to questions without prior preparation. All interviews were conducted within 14 days to ensure a smooth progress of the research without major changes in my own or my interviewees professional life.

The qualitative interview questions for the research can be found in chapter 4 as introductions to the IQ's as well as in appendix of the thesis. The questions are based on the deep literature research that supports the theoretical framework of the thesis. It was interesting to search for literature since the selection of current study material was very large, so it was at times difficult to limit the choices.

3.3.4   Focus group

The focus group for the qualitative research consisted of professionals from international backgrounds. Besides German and Finnish professionals, an Indian and British professional have been interviewed. In addition to the professionals, two business students belong to the focus group from Austria and Northern Italy.

The reason for including two business students into the focus group was to see the difference in perception of the topic between experienced professionals in their field of marketing communication and future professionals in the entry stage of their career. The business students were chosen from the university environment. The objective in interviewing them was to get an insight into educational experience with the topic and their awareness of this marketing practice.

The chosen professionals were chosen from earlier networking, university environment and working experiences in the field of marketing and communication. Among the interviewees were one teachers from a university of applied sciences, as well as professionals working in related fields to the research topics, including supervisors of the my internship company, to get a closer insight into their work experience with the topic, their usage of trade media marketing and press releases, as well as their ideas and perception of social media practices for press releases and trade media marketing approaches in current business decision and marketing departments.

Specific fields professionals and experts have been chosen from are:
- Sales or Marketing field
- Student environment from university of applied sciences
- Communication field
- Social Media field
- Press Release Distribution Service field

Overall, the goal has been to get insights into the perception of trade media marketing among current professionals with work experience and in the entry stage of their career to find expectations, opinions, criteria, and experiences to consider when developing and improving social media practices for valuable recommendations given in the end of the thesis.

Every interviewee was asked the same set of questions during the interview, guided by explanations and examples given by the situation to avoid misunderstandings. The interviews were conducted in English, although help and explanation were in two case given in German language in form of vocabulary support and ensure the interviewee in giving precise answers to a question.

Figure 6. Research process: Interview planning, conduction, analysis, and recommendations

Based on Figure 6 the process of the thesis can be overviewed from prior research on the topic and set up of the framework to selection of focus group, interview conduction, qualitative thematical analysis of the respondence to connections with IQ 1 to 4 and from which lastly the recommendations and outcome of the thesis are made.

3.4 Data analysis

According to Emerald Group Publishing qualitative data can be roughly separated into two main categories. Firstly, data can be collected by the researcher though for instance interviews, focus groups and ethnographic field observations. Secondly, existing data published prior to the research can be gathered from for example public documents, statistics, and emails (Emerald Group Publishing 2021). So, data can be collected from primary and secondary sources.

Ereaut (2002, 62-68) stated that there are different approaches to analyse qualitative data and it is on the researcher and author to choose the best and most appropriate method for the research.

For the research that results in recommendations to improve social media practices for press releases, the qualitative interviews and its respondence was analysed by recorded interview session, notes of behaviour and reactions during the conversation, as well as notes of main aspects and experiences from the interview. The question and follow-up questions were written with the intention to avoid yes or no as answers but have well explained and opinions answers from professionals.

As mentioned in 3.3.3 when explaining the interview methods used for the research, the notes were taken the same day of the interview and later written into a table that allows a straight comparison between the main answers of interviewees. For the presentation of answers according to the investigative questions, several tables were preferred for the analysis since matrices have a limited word input, and it was mandatory to contain longer answers and thoughts for comparison. Quotes and word-choice were possible to note down and it gave a clearer overview to conclude findings and results in the end, as well as it eased the process of finding recommendation according to the respondence. Interpretation of answers and behaviour during the interviews were included and compared accurately and thoroughly.

4 The impact of social media practices on trade media marketing

This chapter is divided into two sub-chapters that present the results and findings of the qualitative interview research with the focus group separately according to the four investigative questions. Depiction method is used with tables to document the answers and findings, and respondents are kept anonymous.

4.1 Interview findings

This subchapter contains the results and responses of the interviewees to the main research question "What are the most effective social media practices for trade media marketing to achieve a high outreach and visible for industrial and product news, such as press releases?".

To start an overview of the respondence is given, followed by introducing and presenting the findings and results of the interviews categorized by the four investigative questions, IQ1, IQ2, IQ3 and IQ4. The interviewees are kept anonymous, meaning their names and companies are not mentioned.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with eight interviewees as a part of a focus group. From table 1 it can be noted that the respondents are in different age groups and career levels, as well as company size. The common interest of all interviewees is the area marketing and communication, as it is required for this qualitative interview to answer on questions, be aware of work and experiences, as well as improvement thoughts and current pain points to share.

Table 1. Introduction of the interviewees within the focus group

Respondent	Gender	Age	Job position	Company size
1	Female	35 – 45	Media Head and Project Manager	Small company, 1-10 employees
2	Male	35 – 45	Marketing Coordinator	Small company, 1-10 employees
3	Male	55 +	Managing Director	Small company, 1-10 employees
4	Female	20 – 25	Marketing student (UAS)	/
5	Female	20 – 25	Business Communication Student (UAS)	/
6	Male	25 – 35	Founder and CMO	Small company, 15 – 20 employees
7	Female	25 – 35	Inside Sales Manager	Medium-sized company, 50 – 100 employees

8	Female	45 – 55	Senior lecturer in Communication	University of applied Sciences, 1.000+ employees

4.1.1 IQ 1 Findings

IQ 1: What is the professional background and what are the preferred mediums, sources to retrieve information a personal objectives, goals, and challenges?

The investigative question explores the professional background of every interviewee that participated in the research to overview the experience and career level that is behind their responses. As it can be seen in table 2, the main questions and prepared follow-up questions for this first investigative question therefore targets to get to know the interviewee and his or her work experiences, roles, goals, preference, objectives, and challenges.

Table 2. Interview questions for IQ1

Questions	Follow-ups	Theme
What is your professional background and preferred mediums?	What sources are you using to retrieve information?	*Target groups and user persona development*
What are your goals and what is your role in the purchasing process?	What can be professionally challenging and what can be objections for you with trade media marketing?	

Basic information, experiences, and preference in for example information retrieval, as well as thoughts about challenges, objectives and goals were collected data from these interview questions. Moreover, information about background education and career level. Additionally, tone-of-voice and reaction behaviour are taken into in account.

In the table below, the responses are documented:

Table 3. Respondents on preferences in information retrieval and channels

	Preferences in information retrieval and channels
1	Google and other software
2	Online journals, digital E-magazines, internet searches based on keywords,
3	Online, ordering information in paper form if needed
4	Social Media Platforms, like LinkedIn (as favorite) and Instagram, online research
5	Online research with smartphone and laptop, Google
6	Online research, LinkedIn, and Instagram as well as new tool Clubhouse
7	Online research, CRMSugar, Excel and other communication tools,
8	Based on target or customer: Online on social networks, like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, or Blogs

In table 3, the information retrieval preferences of all eight interviewees are listed. It can be clearly shown that all respondents focus on online research methods, like e-magazines, keyword-based Google searches, blogs, and social networks. Therefore, mediums are from computers, over laptops to tablets and smartphones. Only respondent 3 named ordering printed information if needed to retrieve information as a preferred source. Other mentioned software and tools to retrieve information are work-related communication tools, Excel, CRM systems and Clubhouse.

Overall, this shows as a result a very clear tendency of online information retrieval these days that focusses mainly on social media platforms, blogs and Google which can be used for keyword-based information searches. Supported is this result by the research from Deutsche Fachpresse (2017), which also clearly shows an increased interest of decision makers in digital offers and information retrieval compared to a very low percentage of addressed direct advertisement, field service, and printed client magazines. The focus is on digital offers of companies and trade medias. This tendency can be expected to grow and include new information retrieval technologies in the future.

Table 4. Respondents on professional objectives, goals, and challenges

	Objectives and goals	**Challenges**
1	Delivering and distributing work results	Interest of audience and editors
2	Communication to the right audience	Branding and expertise Very traditional views
3	Selling press releases and reach the right audience	People are not seeing the value enough to actively purchase
4	Finding professional interests by internships	Time management and dedication
5	Finding the best balance between price and quality	Financial budget as a student to pay high prices for quality products. Takes consideration and research.
6	Customer growth	Growing and developing roles withing the process without over engineering
7	Gathering experience for self-employment	Purchasing and Selling
8	Goal of customer: Engagement	Resources (time, money, knowledge)

In table 4, the objectives and goals are compared to the challenges each of the respondents faces during their professional career in marketing and communication. Those answers depend on their precise professional background. So, for press release distribution service employees, the goals are focussed around delivering, distributions, finding the right audiences and selling press releases as a product. For the student group, the process of finding professional interests and basic product quality research is in the focus when it comes to goals. The other experts in the fields of marketing, sales and communication describe their objective and goals as customer growth, gathering work experience and engagement, as well as customer's goals. Challenges therefore for press release communication experts are interest of audiences, branding and expertise, too traditional views, and preferences

towards printed media, as well as sales problems due to a lack of value seen by professionals. For students, the professional challenges are focussing more on time management, dedication of interest as well as financial budgets. And lastly, the challenges for experts in the field of marketing, sales and communication are for one growing and developing roles within the process without over engineering, purchasing, and selling, as well as resources, like time, money, and knowledge.

Overall, the result clearly shows that objectives and goals, as well as challenges vary a lot between professional and students. While professional focus on their exact career and business goals related to work results and performance, the students of the focus group are more personal based on interests, financial security and self-management skills towards future career and employment. Professionals' goals and challenges are strongly related to their operation and work routines, for instance growth, engagement and reaching the right audience with their work in communication. This tendency to relate goals to their work is likely to imprint on students of the business field when they start their professional career.

4.1.2 IQ 2 Findings

IQ 2: What prior experiences with product news and press release can be recorded and how would the interviewee evaluate the importance and influence of trade media marketing?

The second investigative question deals with prior experiences in trade media marketing and release communication during their work or education and their professional opinion on influences and importance of trade media marketing, often based on their company's marketing operation. In table 4, the main questions and follow-up questions about experience with products news is asked from the interviewees. Also, the frequency in which the respondents read and follow press releases is interrogated. Additionally, the respondent's opinion and thoughts on influences of trade media, as well as experience with press releases and trade media is becoming a focus.

Table 5. Interview questions for IQ2

Questions	Follow-ups	Theme
What is your experience with product news?	How often do you read trade media and press releases and on what channels?	*Development of press release marketing*
How would you evaluate the influence of trade medias personally and why?	What is your opinion and experience on press releases and trade medias?	

The data is taken from their opinions and thoughts on product news, press releases, trade media and how they evaluate the importance for business, also their own company. Additionally, the frequency is a valuable data to analyse and overview among interviewees connected to their prior given background information. Furthermore, behavioural aspects, like reactions and tone-of-voice are considered.

In the table below, the responses are documented:

Table 6. Respondents on prior experience with press release marketing and communication

	Prior experience with press release marketing and communication
1	Work experience, daily consumption web und print, credible and neutral
2	Reaching out to potential customers Personal trade media experiences weekly and work-related daily in a combination of web, Print and Social Media
3	Daily consumption of trade media, mostly web or printed.
4	Helps decision processes with ethics and values. Weekly to monthly consumption
5	Internship work experience Not following and reading many press releases
6	For awareness, an editor network can be built that follows on social media to catch up. Daily press release consumption
7	Experience in the field is valuable and creates product understanding. Reading of press releases by interest.
8	Reads just relevant press releases filtered by personal interest on daily basis. Subscripted also to newsletters.

In table 6, the prior experiences with Press Release Marketing and Communication are asked from the interviewees. The press release experts state a recent work experience in the field by reaching out to potential customers with press releases and daily consumption of trade media and press releases on a combination of web, printed and social media channels. The students, that have been interviewed, stated that they do use press releases on a regular basis, like weekly to monthly, for decision processes about ethics, values, and quality of product. One of the interviewed students had work experience from an internship. The marketing, communication, and sales professionals state their prior experiences as interest-based consumption and their business-related networks of editors to publish work related product and corporate news. Experience therefore is very valuable to create a product understanding. The consumption of the interviewed experts is daily.

Overall, the results conclude that business professionals in the fields of marketing and communication have large prior experience with press releases in its traditional form, but also online and on social media platforms with a daily consumption. This can be related to the study of Deutsche Fachpresse (2017), which shows that professional spend an average of one workday monthly on reading press releases and trade media. Students still read only

read based on personal interested on a regular basis in the process of information retrieval for smaller products. They interest themselves less in the product launch or details, but in ethics and values concerning company and product. This can be explained by the lack of professional relation towards press releases, and it is likely to change once they start their career. It can be clearly said that the overall consumption of press release happens online and on social media, which is likely to increase in the future, also with further developed technologies. Also, as mentioned in 2.1 by a source from Deutsche Fachpresse (2017), trade media magazines and websites are targeted to a specific industry audience and those audience truly value the neutral and credible news during purchasing processes. This is confirmed as true by the interviewees. Respondent 4 agreed to its aid during decision processes and all interviewees agreed on the credibility and neutrality of press releases. According to respondent 2, press releases are the optimal tool to reach out to potential customers. Referring to Comcowich (2016), press releases count as a valuable form of media relations and communication strategy which are picked up by medias. This is supported by respondent 7, who answered that experience with press releases is truly valuable and create a good product understanding. This should be the goal for press releases. To succeed with press releases getting the reader's attention and awareness with content is essential. (Preview 2021.) This can be seen as true for every respondent in the end, but especially for the ones who read based on interest. To create engaging social media content, Mark Schaefer (2012) created an approach called RITE (Relevant, Interesting, Timely and Entertaining) that can be used to create the interest among readers and professionals more effectively and successfully. (Kim 2016, 92.)

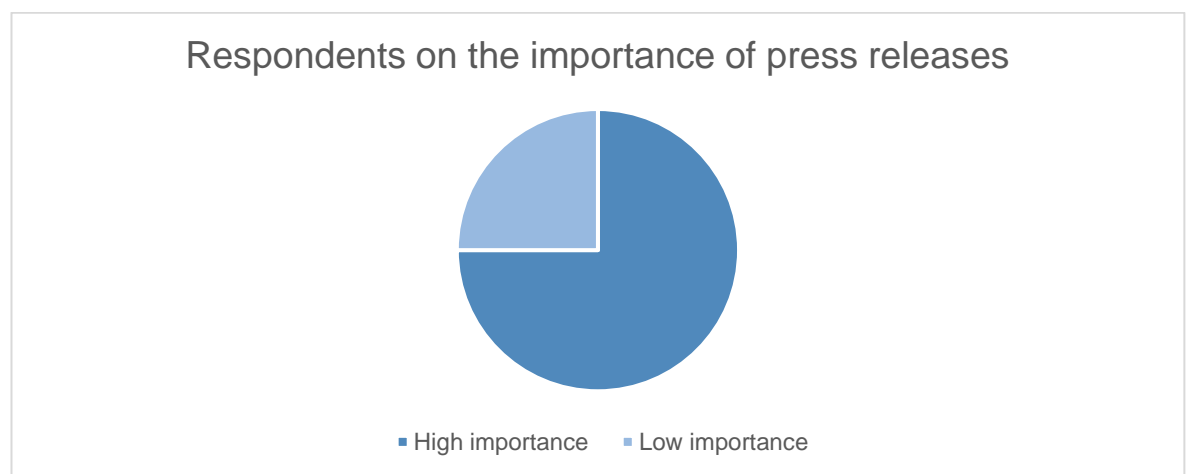Figure 7. Respondents on the importance of press releases

In figure 7, the importance of press releases can be clearly seen as very high among professionals and students due to its neutral character and trustworthy approach to communicate products and innovations to the right professional audience. The 25% of the interviewees who ranked the importance as rather low, have been students who use trade media

and press releases on a more personal interest basis. Among the professionals the importance has been ranked as very high to mandatory for their business operations, which shows the correctness of the study by the Deutsche Fachpresse (2017), which states that print or digital are the most used and trusted B2B information source by professional decision makers. This also shows the good reputation of press releases that has been maintained over the last decades and it is not likely to change within the next decades. Press releases are written communication with brief but specific information about products, event or other happening. (Wolfe 2021.) Also, according to Oxford Academic (2021), the press releases are described as important to highlight stories and happening for articles and getting journalists' attention. The target is always to get media coverage with the news. In the end, the respondents underlined the importance based on the framework concepts and proved the importance of press releases for the industrial audience and readership as an essential platform to highlight and achieve coverage in journals for B2B-news.

4.1.3   IQ 3 Findings

IQ 3: What opportunities can be seen from social media practices for trade media marketing and the influence word of mouth marketing? How often are trade media read on social media and taken into consideration for purchases?

The third investigative question explores possible opportunities that interviewed professionals can see from social media practices for press releases and their opinion and experiences with word-of-mouth marketing. Also, a deeper insight into frequency of reading on social media and influence into their company operation and purchases.

In table 6, the interview questions can be seen dealing with the above-mentioned topic in form of different main and follow-up questions about opportunities, platform ideas, word-of-mouth marketing and challenges concerning social media practices for press releases. Lastly the interviewees are asked for the frequency of reading press releases on social media and if their follow trade media and press releases on social media platforms.

Table 7. Interview questions for IQ3

Questions	Follow-ups	Theme
What opportunities do you see for Press Releases on Social Media platforms? What impact does of WOM marketing have for press releases on social media – explain opinion?	Which platforms would you consider optimal for press releases and trade media? What can be challenges of integration of press releases on social media?	*Developing social media practices for press releases on social media*

How often do you read press releases on your social media channels during free time?	Do you follow trade media and editors on social media, for instance Twitter and LinkedIn?	

The data is again taken from opinions and thoughts about opportunities, platforms, word-of-mouth marketing and challenges, as well as own experiences with product news on social media and following of those. Additionally, tone-of-voice and reaction behaviour are taken into in account.

In the table below, the responses are documented:

Table 8. Respondents on opinions on opportunities and challenges of press releases on social media platforms

	Opinions on opportunities and challenges of press release on social media platforms
1	Approaching new generations Not everyone aware of social media content
2	Credibility and trust are questionable. High competition Options of paid content
3	Higher outreach possible which gives credibility
4	Active followers are mandatory. Press releases limited but with potential. Boost in leads and customer growth through Social Media.
5	Benefits in outreach and supporting features, but not credible and risk of identification of junk
6	Social media is an effective tool to spread news, visuals are offering new opportunities
7	Approaching younger age group, industry specific benefits,
8	Great potential in sharing, conversation and engaging

In table 8, the results for this interview question clearly state that there are many very different opportunities seen by professionals for social media practices that can be ranked as very important. Social media marketing, as an approach to market and promote products and services online on social media platforms and networks offers to reach many new customers and generation, increase engagement, and allows to promote desired values of products or company, such as culture, vision, and mission. (Hayes 2018.) These benefits of social media practices for press releases have also been named by many respondents. Respondent 1 right away answered that social medias biggest benefit is to engage the new and younger generation of decision makers with press releases.

Other benefits are listed by Thompson (2015), who names for instance publicity, getting into Google News, trust and driving traffic are advantages of social media usage for trade media campaigns. News releases receive instantly visibility which increases brand trust and transparency. Also, those points were mentioned in the respondents' answers. While respondent

2 sees the credibility and trust of news on social media as questionable regarding the account who distributes the news, interviewee 3 perceives the high outreach, that social media offers, as a sign of high credibility. The press release experts see opportunities in options of paid content boosting on social media to widen the outreach based on special targeting functions for example. Generally, social media offers to reach by hashtags and sharing functions to widen the outreach also in organic form and that way gives credibility.

Even though the interviewees saw potential challenges of social media practices, most points mentioned have been benefits can be achieved to the advantage of a business. The biggest potential of social media practices therefore has been seen in approaching new age groups, increase in outreach, paid advertisement, boosts in leads, visualisation, industry specific benefits and features like sharing and actively engaging customers. These benefits will have a strong impact on the digital future of press releases and certainly assist the success of press release campaigns in many ways on social media platforms.

The challenges mentioned by the focus group were that not everyone is aware of social media content, high competition, credibility is questionable, perception as junk, and active following of content is mandatory. The high level of competition has been mentioned by Thompson (2015) as a big challenge when using social media for news, since journalist receive those by thousands. Getting attention for news releases is demanding and required own media contacts. To rise the credibility of content on social media the ICC (2021) offers communication guidelines for marketers and communication. The accessibility of social media to the senior generation is a challenge that needs consideration depending on industry and audience of a press release.

Table 9. Respondents on opportunities of word-of-mouth marketing

	Opportunities of word-of-mouth marketing
1	Influences press release to a certain extent but not fully
2	Good selling points, comparison to fairs and exhibitions
3	Important as a source and builds trust, more likely to follow friends advise
4	WOM marketing depends on company and target group
5	Very essential for product news to engage customers
6	WOM very important to break through the clutter and stand out
7	Recommendations are following before research and comparisons are made
8	Referrals and recommendations are very credible

In table 9, the opinions of respondents on the opportunities given by word-of-mouth marketing are listed. The press release experts are seeing it as good selling points, like fairs

and exhibitions, and as an important source for trust building between customers and business. Customers are more likely to trust advises from friends than advertisement. Just respondent 1 evaluates the importance only to a certain extent after a first hesitation.

The students in the focus group answered that WOM marketing influence depends on company and target group, but generally, it is seen as very essential for product news to engage customers and have referrals over own research. The marketing, sales and communication experts see WOM marketing as well as very important "to break through the clutter", as the respondent 6 formulated. Recommendations are always followed before research and comparisons are online made. Referrals and recommendations are very credible forms of marketing.

Overall, the importance of WOM marketing is not to be underestimated for press releases, especially on social media platforms. It clearly shows in the respondence that professionals believe in the impact of recommendation and referrals. It is a very active way to engage customers for marketing of a product of service to stand out with trust and credibility. According to van den Bergh and Behrer (2013, 48), relevant and helpful content is crucial to offer to the young generation. Respondent 3 agreed, that it is important to build trust, and he added that it is more likely to follow a friend's advice before starting an own decision process on a product. As van den Bergh and Behrer (2013, 48) correctly say, word-of-mouth marketing as a powerful effect on purchasing preferences. According to Kenton (2020), word-of-mouth marketing is the most impactful tool since 92% of customers trust friends more than traditional news platforms. Respondent 8 stated that referrals and recommendation are very credible and respondent 7 added that WOM marketing is essential for products news to engage customers. The influence of WOM marketing is very strong between single customers and the company and it has become easier due to social media platforms to refer and recommend posts of companies directly to friends by sharing, liking, and commenting on content. This is a very future oriented marketing approach that still has a lot of potential.
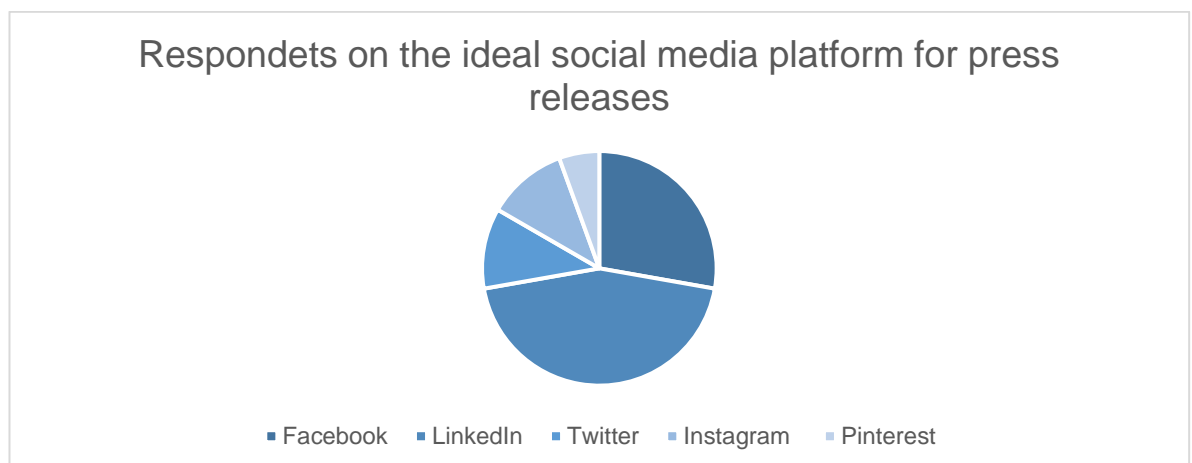

Figure 8. Respondents on the ideal social media platform for press releases

In figure 8, the answers on ideal platform ideas of respondents are analysed in a pie chart. The mentioned platform names were counted together to see the platform mentioned the most and the least by professionals. Pinterest therefore got mentioned once during the interviews, while Twitter and Instagram got mentioned as optimal channels by two different interviewees. Facebook has been mentioned by a total of five interviewees while LinkedIn, as the professional social network, has been mentioned by all eight interviewees as an ideal platform.

Both platforms are widely known for successful social media marketing and paid advertisement among professionals and students. Even though Twitter had been in theory chosen as the second optimal platform for trade media marketing due to its relevance to journalist and reputation as news platform, Facebook was the second most named platform among the focus group. It got a total of 5 votes, while LinkedIn, as the post popular platform for product news among interviewed professionals, received a total of 8 votes.

During the interviews, Twitter only received a total of 2 votes. This result for Twitter can be explained by its little use among people these days, since Facebook indeed has the bigger and more diverse userbase. According to Bodnar and Cohen (2019, 109) the idea of Twitter is to keep it simple and use the power of sharing. But the limitations of the platforms are present in word-count, which has been criticized by one respondent.

In terms of outreach and engagement Facebook offers more potential to companies and businesses to achieve visibility for their news and operation. For the future, potential can be seen in Twitter, but the dominance of LinkedIn and Facebook in terms of social media marketing will certainly grow and continue due to its similarities. Not without a reason LinkedIn is known as "(…) Facebook with suit and tie (…)". (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 97.) The benefits of LinkedIn are successful driving and concerting of leads to customers, as well as being a powerful tool for marketing and sales offering opportunities for prequalified, inbound leads. (Bodnar & Cohen 2012, 97.)

4.1.4 IQ 4 Findings

IQ 4: What factors are important for social media practices in trade media marketing, what are benefits and can trade media marketing survive without social media marketing approaches?

The fourth and last investigative question deals with factors and features on social media that can be considered valuable or essential for the interviewee or a business. Furthermore, benefits are discussed as well as the question, if trade media marketing and press releases could survive without digital and social media marketing. In table 8 below, the questions can

be seen. The focus is on important factors, features, impact for editors, as well as the question about importance of social media for press releases.

Table 10. Interview questions for IQ4

Questions	Follow-ups	Theme
What do you consider most important for including social media practices for press release mailing? → Mobile optimized templates → Choice of hashtags / tags (product or company specific) → Teaser version of press releases	What are other factors you consider important for press releases on social media?	*Ranking factors, challenges, and benefits of the process*
How do you evaluate the impact of social media practices for editors?	Why?	
Since Social Media Marketing gets more and more popular, how important do you think it is for press releases to be integrated on social media?	Why?	

The data is taken from opinions and thoughts about factors, features, impacts, benefits, and importance of social media for press releases. Additionally, tone-of-voice and reaction behaviour are taken into in account.

In the table below, the responses are documented:

Table 11. Respondents on benefits and features on social media platforms

	Opinion on benefits and features on social media platforms
1	Mobile optimization is important and priority
2	Digital journey and getting noted online is essential. Hashtags help to reach right audience. Social Media drives traffic by backlinks. Visualization is an important feature.
3	Focus should be on content. Two version for traditional and social media. Benefits are that it is simple and easy to reach out
4	Must be versatile, no repetitions. Demands marketing knowledge. Valuable for followers
5	Important factors are mobile optimizations especially for smartphone use. Hashtags that can also be used more on Facebook. Connection networking. Outreach increase. Less text, and more visuals.
6	Important factors are mobile optimization.

	Hashtags use (also on Facebook) Customization.
7	Teaser versions combining first few seconds on social media to create backlinks. First impression
8	More engagement possibilities. Content creation and layout matters. Timing, schedule, and trends are important factor.

In table 11, the benefits and features on social media platforms are closer described and named by the interviewees. The press release experts are seeing benefits in mobile optimization, digital journeys, hashtags, driving traffic, backlinks, as well as the simple and easy outreach. Also important is the visualization for them, as well as the focus on content pieces. Suggestions like two versions for tradition and social media format have been made by for example respondent 3.

The students see benefits in versatile content on social media. Therefore, an eye for detail and avoiding repetitions is important. This demands strong marketing knowledge that makes it very valuable for followers to follow press releases on social media's trade media. And, for students, mobile optimization, hashtags, connection networking, outreach and visualization are major benefits and features that social media offers. Respondent 5 specifically states that hashtags can be used more to engage, especially on Facebook.

The marketing, communication and sales experts that have been interviewed replied that also for them mobile optimization is a very essential features and benefit. But also, customization and hashtag usage, and visualization in content and layout, engagement possibilities and timing, schedule and trends are important as benefits and features to consider. Especially as a targeting options, organic hashtags are a way to easily reach out to industrial audiences. Facebook recently introduced hashtags, but the usage has a strong potential to be increased by professionals.

Overall, the results show that features of social media platforms are very essential for professionals when considering social media marketing for their news. Referring to Realwire (2021), social media news releases are designed in its format for the online media world. The new format on social media platforms can be images, audios or videos including relevant links. This supports respondents 2 and 7, who said that essential features are the creation of backlinks. Also, the focus on content and formats is highlighted by interviewee 3 with the idea of two formats for one press releases supporting traditional and social media distribution. Respondent 4 adds that the content needs to be versatile to avoid repetition and respondent 8 as well sees big benefits of layout and content creation for press releases on social media. As a conclusion, it can be said that mobile optimization is a rising trends for the digital journey of news that will only increase towards the future. The focus also shifts from pure text to visual content creation and customization. It demands a versatile style and

branded layouts to keep attracting potential customers. Visualization is the key for success especially regarding future trends. Showing a visual teaser of the article and as well producing valuable backlinks is a truly valuable form of marketing and provides the strong first impression products and companies need online to get the right visibility and recognition. On social media, it is valuable to follow the famous saying that less is more. This means less text, but more visual effort.
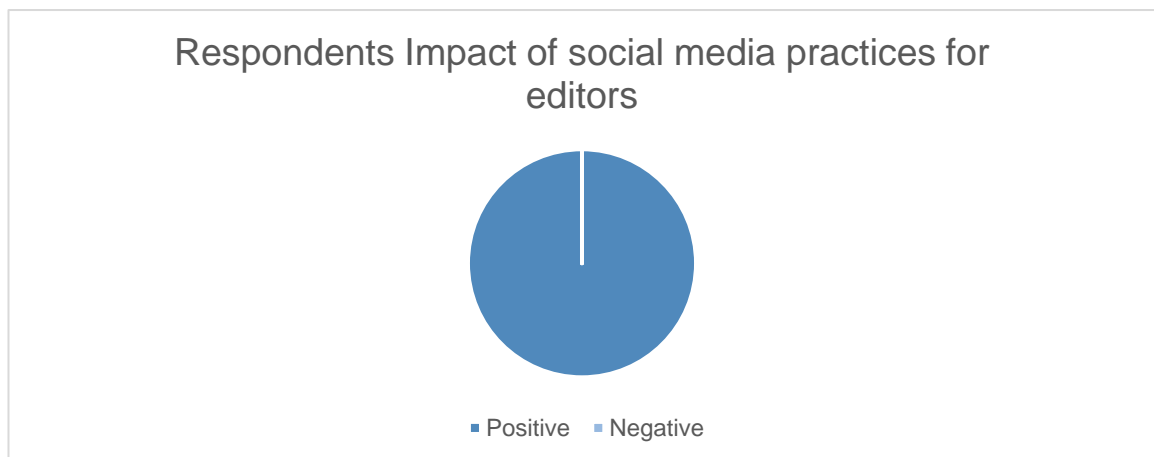

Figure 9. Respondents on the impact of social media practices for editors

In figure 9, the importance and impact of social media practices for editors and their workload by the interviewed professional is documented. The respondents were overall seeing many benefits for editors when it comes to active use of social media for industry specific news and promoting their magazine and editorial work. Respondent 1 answered that often there is not yet a lot of connection and engagement, but both parties would benefit from a corporation on social media. According to respondent 2, there are shared values and benefits between distributors, companies and editors which can be a great advantage. Overall answers were that social media can offer a simple and wide outreach for companies and magazines if done with the right knowledge and practices. Also, an relieve of the workload can clearly be seen for editor. In the case of respondent 6, a company has built a network on social media where editors follow and catch up on their news and content distribution.

This result will only increase in its meaning during the future and with more use of social media practices for press releases, the work of editors can be eased. Editors following company news on social media gives them a channel to publish and retrieve information in a very efficient way directly from the distributor. By following news from industry-relevant distributors on social channels, the challenge of receiving and filtering email inboxes of thousands of social media news releases and press releases, as mentioned by Thompson (2015) as one major challenge, can be eased, and relevant content directly retrieved and used for content creation and article writing. This way both, distributors and editors, benefit from common practices. These shared values and connections should be used in the future

to ease routines and collaborate to achieve best results as a team on trade media publications.

Table 12. Respondents on if press releases can survive without social media in the future.

	Can press releases survive without social media in the future?
1	Difficult to mix traditional and modern marketing, both ways are important
2	Videos and visuals are the future, changes mandatory to stay relevant
3	Could not answer at first, combination of traditional and social media would be the best option
4	Corporate news to expert will stay relevant also in traditional trade media
5	(Unsure) Both needed, no survival alone
6	Online sources are more permanent and valuable, links bring longer trust, at least co-existence
7	Printed is still very important but expected to change in few years' time
8	Traditional press releases in Finland have a strong reputation due to them being fact-based and concise

In table 12, respondents of the conducted interview were asked for their thoughts and opinions about the question if press releases can survive without Social Media in the future.

The press releases experts answered that is difficult to mix traditional and modern marketing, but both ways are important, as well as visuals and videos are a major part of modern marketing. Changes are therefore mandatory. This can be supported when referring to Santoro (2021), who said that, social media news releases are a growing trend in business and industries. There are not many differences between press releases and social media news releases. The differences are defined by three main characteristics: audience, style, and the technology.

Respondent 3 has first not been able to answer the question, but after longer consideration about the matter he agreed to a combination of traditional and social media would be the best option for the future. The students answered that corporate news and press releases will always stay relevant, also in its traditional form. There is no sole survival, they need each other in a combination to bring most success in the future to companies and readership.

And lastly marketing, sales, and communication experts that they are still trusting in traditional approaches and see a co-existence. Respondent 6 answered that for his marketing work online sources are more permanent and valuable since links bring longer trust to his company and clients. On the other hand, respondent 7 replied that printed media still have a very high importance, but this is also expected to change within a few years' time. It can be said that press releases still have a strong reputation in Finland because of their fact-based, neutral, and concise approach and writing.

For the future, the answers on this question predict that both forms of press releases will have a big meaning in business, but even though printed media are still very important, it is likely to change within a few years, as respondent 7 answered during the interview. Especially due to paper saving mentality, printing will be expected to decrease and at some point, be fully replaced by web and mobile device options. Many newspapers and trade medias already focus on their web and mobile experience and reduce the number of monthly editions. So, the trends towards mobile trade media rises and will rise still in the future with a clear integration of social media channels into work and publishing routines.

4.2   Overall impact of findings

Overall, it can be said that for the first investigative questions, information retrieval is nowadays a very much online-based research focussing keyword-based Google searches, e-magazines, blogs, and social networks. Most used mediums are laptops, computers, and smartphones. This tendency towards online information retrieval is expected to say and increase towards the future, also considering future technologies that will increase the success and decrease efforts. Objectives and goals among professional respondents are focussing on work results, professional interest, outreach, and audience, as well as customer growth, quality, experience, and engagement. Challenges on the other hand are interest, branding, traditional approaches, expertise, time management and dedication, as well as financial budgets, growing and developing, and resources. The goals and objectives are clearly to be divided between the students and the experiences professionals within the focus group since the students showed a very personal attitude, while professionals related goals, objectives, and challenges strongly to their professional and work routines.

For the second investigative questions, the prior experience and consumption of press releases is that most of them have daily contact to product news, at least on a work-related basis sorted by interests. Product understanding from press releases is evaluated as very valuable for professionals. Only the students showed interest and consumption on a less regular basis and less experience with it. A reason for that can be that they are not developing a product understanding and without big experiences or determination to certain industry, it is less interesting to follow up on certain industry news. This can also be seen from the pie chart showing the respondence on the importance of press releases, which shows that 75% of respondents, so clearly over half of the respondents, evaluate it as high. For example, respondent 1 answered that industrial news with a focus on products and technology are better than plain company news. Respondent 2 replied that B2B is the most credible because it is written from experts to experts and respondent 4 states that press releases are the biggest B2B customer communication method. This tendencies of impact

and experience is expected rise towards the future and change for the business students as soon as they enter their professional career. Their vision can be expected to change in focussing on work routine priorities rather than personal importance of press releases.

For the third investigative question, the opportunities in social media news releases and social media marketing seen by interviewees are approaching new generations, especially younger audiences, options of paid advertisement in social media platforms that boost and target content, and supporting features like sharing, conversations and engaging. Out of those benefits, the outreach increases, and industry specific audiences are addressed, which gives credibility. Opportunities are also seen in spreading news and visual use.

Word-of-mouth-marketing has a major impact on social media news releases according to the interviewees. Word-of-mouth marketing is a very successful way to sell, comparable to fairs and exhibitions, and it also stands for trust building since friends' recommendation are more likely to be followed before own research based on internet sources. Social media enables WOM marketing within its commenting by sharing, liking, and commenting on posts, which notifies contacts about preferences and activity.

The TARES Ethics Model (Baker & Martinson 2001) can be applied well with the five valuable guidelines in communications, which are truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity, and social responsibility according to the interview result. This can be well related to the impact of communicating with press releases, and especially the active use of word-of-mouth marketing. Truthfulness, authenticity, and respect are main points when attracting customers to engage and active them for recommendations. For the engagement and creation of interest among readers also the RITE approach can be used, which was created by Mark Schaefer (2012), to create relevant, interesting, timely and entertaining content. (Kim 2016, 92.) According to the interview results, versatile and creative content creations and layout are essential for the social media news releases. Moreover, according to Kim (2016, 116-117) there are three golden rules on social media for public relations and marketing communication: engaging with others as you want to be engaged with, building a community, not a broadcast platform, and lastly leverage the platform culture. All three can be applied for social media practices to support and boost press releases.

For the platform suggestions by the interviewees, LinkedIn has been mentioned by every interviewee as the ideal platform for social media press releases and social media marketing of product news. Second place in the ranking with a count of five mentions from interviewees is Facebook. Twitter and Instagram were only mentioned by two different interviewees and Pinterest has been mentioned once. So, clearly LinkedIn is an impactful professional channel for social media press releases. It has been interesting to see that Twitter

as the journalist and news network has not been mentioned more often than Facebook, but several interviewees criticized its posting limitations of 280 characters. Also, Facebook and LinkedIn share a very similar platform structure and they are very famous for successful social media marketing among companies since they offer a very big and diverse userbase.

For the fourth investigative question it can be summarized that mobile optimization, digital journey, backlinks, visualization and focus on content are key to success for the interviewed professionals for social media news releases. Ideas are to make content versatile to avoid repetitions, to use hashtags effectively on all platforms and to create connection networks to simplify the outreaching to the targeted audiences. Timing, schedule, and trends are also valuable to be consider. The key for future success on social media is have less text and more visuals to attract customers with a first visual impression, rather than long articles. The visual lures readers into opening the content or caption.

The editors benefit from the social media practices and social media news releases as well. Social media can be seen from their perspective as a tool to catch up on recent news and company operations that is relevant in their readership's field or industry. Opportunities to network with those companies and follow their activities are of major value. Also, due to shared values in promoting the product, magazine, or company, it is a win-win situation that eases the processes and workloads for both parties.

The final question to the interviewees has been if press releases are able to survive without social media in the future. To summarize the answers, it can be said that traditional press releases still have a good reputation and at least a co-existence of traditional press releases and social media news releases can be seen by most professionals in the future. Nowadays and in the future links are becoming more valuable for business, which shows the continuous digital development of press releases towards the next years. But in both forms and in co-existence press releases fulfil their purpose in communication announcing and describing specific information about products or services.

Overall, it can be said now that traditional press releases are building a strongly reliable and credible foundation for the digital journey towards the further development of social media news releases with social media practices and recommendations. The professionals and students have given many opinions, thoughts and ideas on their experience and perception of the news, as well as numbers and values to analyse for example the channels and importance. This way also an outlook on future develop can be given.

Nevertheless, challenges with the use of social media can occur and being prepared and having crisis guidelines, such as introduced by The App Concept (2020), is essential for the maintenance of an online presence and active news distribution.

From this collected and analysed data, recommendation for effective social media practices can now be developed, that help social media news releases from organizations and companies in the future.

5 Recommendation

This chapter is divided into six sub-chapters that present the reflection of the thesis, including the recommendations, consideration of validity and reliability, as well as limitation of the study, summary and conclusion, suggestions for future research and development, as well as lastly a reflection of learning.

5.1 Recommendations for social media practices

From the interview answers and its analyses, five golden practices to consider for the writing and distribution or publication process of social media news releases can be taken which have a strong value for organizations and companies.

Golden Practice 1: Mobile optimization and visualisation is the key to success.

Mobile optimization of websites and content is an extremely important factor when writing and distributing any kind of news nowadays and this trend will only grow towards the future. It can only be recommended to treat it as a priority when planning a digital campaign or any kind of content that will be published for a business.

Therefore, connected to the mobile optimization, visualization also becomes an important feature and content, as well as layout, matters as it has never before. The focus on versatility and content itself is based on the idea of less text and more visuals on social media, as well as the importance of first impressions. Therefore, compact, and engaging content that attracts users within the first seconds are the key to success.

To combine traditional press releases and social media news releases, is a very recommended practice to offer two formats of news. This means for the press release to exist in two formats, traditionally text based and mobile optimized with focus on visualization, like a teaser.

Golden Practice 2: Focus on online presence in the future.

Looking towards the future, online presence of businesses is becoming more and more important on social media and the web. One major argument for a well-planned and coordinated online presence is that professional's preferences in information retrieval are clearly towards online research with tools like keyword-based Google searches, social media platforms and e-magazines, as well as blogs. Also, the medium preferences are indicating very clear preferences towards computers, laptops, and smartphones.

A strong online presence and company news feed is very effective when creating backlinks to websites and have a long-lasting effect since online sources and links are more permanent than for example newspapers. The digital platforms are expected to grow in importance, and they are very valuable for networking and reaching, as well as engaging customer easiest and most industry specific.

Golden Practice 3: Channel suggestions are LinkedIn and Facebook.

Disproving the first platform selection from theoretical framework, Facebook - instead of Twitter - has had the higher popularity among asked professionals, so it is the second recommended platform besides LinkedIn.

LinkedIn has been named as the optimal platform for press releases by every asked professional of the study. LinkedIn has the strong reputations as a B2B and professional network that values business and product news, offers spaces for employee branding and client relations, as well as opportunities for recruitment processes and job advertisement. Press releases can be shared by companies to followers, content can be supported by paid advertisement options, as well as organically targeted and shared within industry specific feeds, groups, stories and more. The outreach can easily be widened by simple engagement of customers, hashtags, as well as sharing, liking, and commenting.

Facebook is very similar to LinkedIn and very actively used by companies and businesses to promote and share content. It works in a very similar way like LinkedIn, the only difference is that Facebook is less professional and industry specific. Facebook's audience is very private and casual.

Golden Practice 4: Using the features like hashtags, sharing, conversations and paid ads.

To create a wider audience, several important features are highly recommended to be used to boost the impact and engage customers on social media platforms. The features include firstly hashtags that can target a press release towards an audience that followers' certain keywords on the platform and therefore interests themselves in that field.

Also, the very valuable features include paid advertisement options that boost content by special targeting and outreach, as well as sharing of content between users, tagging, liking and commenting which lets company news content appear in more feeds and notifications.

By using social media and the recommended features, the benefits and outcome will be approaching new generations by spreading news, outreach increase as well as self-branding and credibility online.

Golden Practice 5: Word-of-mouth marketing builds incomparable trust.

Word-of-mouth marketing is one of the most important recommendation for social media press releases and it perfectly describes the influence of social media to spreading news. Social media is based on referring and recommending posts, connections like followed accounts and content to friends. This happens in a very similar way to recommendations in real life. If a friend likes posts, this will be notified to you, to check if you share the interest and alert, you of the post, which can be about product.

Generally, it can be said word-of-mouth marketing is building strong trust and is evaluated as an excellent selling point since recommendation from friends are followed before online research based on internet sources are done. Based on honest feedback and recommendation of trusted friends and colleagues, a customized and interest-based perception is created.

Golden Practice 1	• Mobile optimization and visualisation is the key to success
Golden Practice 2	• Focus on online presence in the future
Golden Practice 3	• Channel suggestions are LinkedIn and Facebook.
Golden Practice 4	• Using the features like hashtags, sharing, conversations and paid ads
Golden Practice 5	• Word-of-mouth marketing builds incomparable trust

Figure 10. Overview over the five golden practices for social media usage in trade media marketing

In figure 10, the recommendations and golden practices for social media usage in trade media marketing are again briefly presented with their headlines as an easy overview and reminder of main aspects to the reader.

5.2   Validity and reliability consideration

The validity and reliability consideration consists of plausibility, credibility, and trustworthiness. In this subchapter reflects on the descriptive validity, interpretative validity, theoretical validity, researcher bias, internal validity, and lastly external validity of this thesis referring to Johnson and Cristensen (2004).

The descriptive validity focuses on the accuracy in reporting descriptive information, like behaviour, setting and speech of the respondence according to Kinnunen (2010). This accuracy is given to transcription of main points right after interviews were conducted and the behaviour of interviewees were documented during the interview process focussing on tone-of-voice, mimic, and hesitations.

The interpretive validity focuses on understanding the respondents thought, views and intentions accurately according Kinnunen (2010). In the conducted research project, the respondents and their answers to the questions are very accurately shown and connected. In the analysis, exact citations of the respondents are used in connection with the framework to analyse and find recommendation.

For the theoretical validity, the theoretical framework turned out to fit well to the needs and experiences described by professional during the interviews. The research on theory and the qualitative interviews have been conducted with a good understanding from the internship experience. After first doubt when starting the interviews, it quickly turns out to match very well and it was easy to connect framework and results in the analysis to find successful recommendations. Although some concerns and negative samples were given, regarding most answers, it fit very well. The only misfit between theory and results, was the channel choices from the framework and from the respondents' answers.

The researcher bias is not given, since the conduction of interviews have been kept neutral and credible as an open conversation to get opinions, experiences and ideas from experts and professionals to analyse. The data and results have not been falsified or manipulated by seeking for certain answers. The process has been carefully documented and analysed based on true data given by professionals. The research has moreover been conducted in an objective manner based on a pure interest of learning and developing more skills in marketing and press release communication.

The internal validity focuses on a cause-effect relationship according Kinnunen (2010). This cause-effect relationship does not exist in this thesis, since the respondence to the interview questions are considered neutral with the goal to observe and find out the best common

practices for companies and professionals. Therefore, hearing from professionals about pain points and experiences, no matter if they are positive or negative, is very valuable to learn to develop. The research has been conducted based on a strong interest in the topic and field and would have succeeded any way, finding recommendations, or proving the theory wrong.

For the external validity, the results of the research project are generalizable. The practices and recommendations for trade media marketing are kept very open and adjustable for different needs of a business, but they target the main aspect, like for instance mobile optimization. It is open to the professionals, who implement the practices, how to use it and in which form. The people for the qualitative research were not randomly selected but selected from university and work environment. The results of Deutsche Fachpresse on the importance of trade media and press releases have been confirmed by the research conducted for this thesis. But in this thesis, the focus has been more towards the recommendation for social media inclusion.

To conclude, the validity for this thesis project is given in all 6 forms to a large degree. The social reality is given due to an exact reproduction and trustworthy analysis of given responses during the research conduction and explained in detail connected to the framework approach. Possible misunderstandings were eliminated by clarifications and explanations during the interview. The results and conclusion portray the views and experiences from a current work and education point. They may be limited due to the low number of respondents. The research includes 8 experienced professionals and students which affects the reliability. The study shows a brief and momentary viewpoint. But the reliability is still given due to the strong work experience and know-how that the professionals have in the focus field of the research. Considering the large number of marketing, sales and communication professionals around the world, the study has potential to be performed with a bigger number of professionals. That way more professionals can share their input on the research questions and more concrete guidelines can result. Also, connected to a quantitative research, a larger, but more general, input on the research can be collected to complement the qualitative approach. But apart from the small number of respondents, the results show a clear and truthful development towards a digital future.

5.3 Limitation of the study

The limitations of the thesis are for example the small number of respondents that have been interviewed, as well as the geographical limitations and language barriers during the interviews. But apart from these limitations, there is no confession to wrongful neither unreliable outcomes nor data results. The professionals have been carefully chosen to ensure

their truthful representation as experts in each field and their answers can speak for many professionals in the same field. Therefore, the answers are very valuable and the outcome reliable towards a digital development in the future.

The qualitative interview research focussed on the opinions, needs and pain points of eight chosen professional that answered a set of questioned divided into four themes, based on the investigative questions. It is essential to mentioned that the focus group of eight highly experienced professionals and experienced students have the right understanding to represent the needs and opinions of every expert group from marketing and sales to communication. So, answers are reliable based on their background and experiences. Many other professionals can refer to what the interviewees answers with strengthens the outcome and recommendation for companies and organizations to implement. But it must be said that the recommendations are very general to show the importance of these factors and their implementation, as well as the development direction towards digitalisation of press releases. Each of the recommendation can and must be customized for a business's specific need after careful analysis.

Moreover, the geographical limitation based the research in Finland and German-speaking countries, including Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. This limitation shows that professionals only from Europe, more precisely the prior mentioned countries, have been chosen to be interviewed. It leaves the question if interviewees from Asian or American markets would have shared the same objectives and needs. But since many of the German-speaking professionals from Austria and Germany are living internationally in Finland, the research can be evaluated as very international, multicultural, and multilingual, that can very well resemble the international needs and pain points of the expert group in a certain field like marketing, communication, or sales. Also, the time for this research project has been limited, which did not allow a deeper and more exact research especially geographically.

And lastly the language barrier has been a limitation of the study. Since the language of the interview has been English, which has not been the mother tongue of a single interviewee nor me and vocabulary and explanations had to be given if needed for further clarification and understanding. But due to well given explanation and vocabulary translation the study's reliable outcome has been strongly ensured and the conduction of the interviews has been at ease.

5.4 Suggestions for future research and development

As mentioned in 5.3, due to limitations, as this is a bachelor's thesis, in geographical aspects and research project time, certain values could have been investigative in more detail to show more culturally diverse answers and national difference all over continents.

Possibilities for future research can be discovering differences in press release communication and trade media marketing, including social media practices, in other regions of the world like America, Asia and Africa, compared to the European perceptions from this thesis. Also, within Europe geographically differences in press release communication and trade media marketing can be further researched and compared.

Based on the study from Deutsche Fachpresse (2017), surveys about the impact and development of press releases should be conducted more often to give companies and manufacturers leads to improve. So, they can find the most effective ways based on the answers of professionals on how to approach their audiences with product news and press releases, as well as how to utilize trade media for their benefit. Also, this survey and research paper about press releases can be conducted within several other countries to give marketing professionals an insight into values and expectations of decision makers.

I recommend to reconduct similar research in small focus group, with the same experts, as well as other experts from other nationalities, during the next years to see the continuous development of digitalization in the mindset of experts and to follow their ideas and needs of press releases. Also, enlarging the focus group for interviews is a possibility to get a wider insight and new opinions from other markets.

Moreover, the qualitative research can be combined with quantitative research survey to reach a wider audience with more generalized questions about the perceptions of press releases, professional needs, and pain points, as well as further opinions. To have chance of filtering valuable answers, an introduction part in the quantitative survey can give closer information of the work experience and field of the respondent. With the combination of qualitative and quantitative research, it can be possible to get detailed answers, as well as clues on directions and development that can be essential for statistics. The higher number of respondents to the quantitative survey also gives more reliability to the study.

5.5 Reflection of learning

During the progress of planning, writing, researching, and finalizing my thesis, I learned a lot of highly valuable working life skills and how to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Firstly, I started my research project for this thesis, with getting acquainted with project

management more. How to start the project plan for my thesis and how to manage my time most effectively, since I have courses at the same time during the two semester that I have planned to conduct the research and writing process of the thesis. The work on my bachelor's thesis has been very free and flexible, which I enjoyed a lot. So, I could write around the scheduled courses and during evenings with my peers to exchange thoughts and ideas on different topics related to their projects. The implementation of a timeline and project management is very beneficial for the workflow of a bachelor's thesis.

For the process of writing, I set weekly tasks and goals to reach for writing or analysing. Also, I had clear due dates for the different parts of my thesis to ensure that it will be ready before May to graduate in time. The strict time-related goals offered self-control and limited postponing of workload. But especially in the beginning the work and learning on the thesis topic needed adaption to the open work style, since I was used to a lot more guidance from prior course project. Finding out how to properly write a thesis and how to start a research took a lot of time spent on reading other thesis projects to get aquatinted with the writing style and research style. I am a perfectionist when it comes to writing and for me it was a very different and uncertain new territory, but with the time and the progress in writing and research, it became more comfortable and easier.

Finding literature was very interesting and difficult at the same time, since credibility, especially of online sources is very essential. For the bachelor's thesis, the I looked at older and newer literature, including books, articles and online sources that fitted the topic, in my opinion. I am very interested in reading books, articles, and web content, so I found more and more useful and interesting content to include into the framework. In the end, I had difficulties to limit myself and narrow down the selection. I succeeded by reminding myself of the research question, the topics social media and trade media marketing, and appreciated recommendations of peers on the sources and ideas. I think that I managed very well in having good focus on valuable literature.

Qualitative research, especially interviews, was my preferred research method. First, I was thinking about having qualitative interviews and a short quantitative survey, to reach a wider audience as well with basic questions and evaluation, but after being told that one research is enough for the bachelor's thesis, interviews were automatically chosen as my method. I feel very comfortable talking to people about experiences and knowledge and I am very good at asking questions to keep a conversation alive and learn more from professionals about their needs, stories, and background. Especially the interview process was very pleasant for me because of the analysis process and learning from my own research, not only content-wise but also in conducting and planning.

Lastly, I learned a lot about my research topic after finishing the internship in the same field. I learned a lot about social media and its platforms, marketing knowledge, definitions of terms, research methods, writing style and analysing data. I am very grateful to have the opportunity to write my bachelor's thesis about a topic that truly interests me and gave me the opportunity to expand my marketing knowledge and learn valuable new things from my research and its respondents. In the end I hope that professionals and companies benefit from the result of my thesis and the made recommendation with insights, clarification that enriches the use of social media and trade media marketing.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Qualitative interview questions

Questions	Follow-ups	Theme
What is your professional background and preferred mediums?	What sources are you using to retrieve information?	*Target groups and user persona development*
What are your goals and what is your role in the purchasing process?	What can be professionally challenging and what can be objections for you with trade media marketing?	
What is your experience with product news?	How often do you read trade media and press releases and on what channels?	*Development of press release marketing*
How would you evaluate the influence of trade medias personally and why?	What is your opinion and experience on press releases and trade medias?	
What opportunities do you see for Press Releases on Social Media platforms? What impact does of WOM marketing have for press releases on social media – explain opinion?	Which platforms would you consider optimal for press releases and trade media? What can be challenges of integration of press releases on social media?	*Developing social media practices for press releases on social media*
How often do you read press releases on your social media channels during free time?	Do you follow trade media and editors on social media, for instance Twitter and LinkedIn?	
What do you consider most important for including social media practices for press release mailing? → Mobile optimized templates → Choice of hashtags / tags (product or company specific) → Teaser version of press releases	What are other factors you consider important for press releases on social media?	*Ranking factors, challenges, and benefits of the process*
How do you evaluate the impact of social media practices for editors?	Why?	
Since Social Media Marketing gets more and more popular, how important do you think it is for press releases to be integrated on social media?	Why?	

Appendix 2. Key Concepts

The TARES Ethics Model:

> "Baker and Martinson (2001) suggest that there are five principles that can help guide communication efforts. These five duties are: truthfulness of the message, authenticity of the organization, respect for the people being communicated with, equity of the message, and social responsibility..." (Kim 2016, 82.)

SMNR – Social Media News Releases:

> "The Social Media News Release (SMNR) is a press release format designed for the online media world … The press release was written with just the "press" in mind, but in the online world your story needs to be told in a format that is relevant to a wide variety of people – journalists, bloggers, publishers and the public at large." (Real-wire.com 2021.)

Difference between SMNR and Press Releases:

> "The "social media news release" is a big buzzword in the industry these days, and recently a client asked about the value of us-ing this service … There's actually not a ton different between a regular release and a SMNR. What makes a social release different than a regular release is largely defined by three characteristics. The audi-ence, the style and the technology." (Santoro 2021.)

Social Media Marketing:

> "Social media marketing (SMM) is the use of social media web-sites and social networks to market a company's products and services. Social media marketing provides companies with a way to reach new customers, engage with existing customers, and promote their desired culture, mission, or tone." (Hayes 2018.)

Word of Mouth Marketing:

> "Word-of-mouth marketing (WOM marketing) is when a consumer's interest in a company's product or service is reflected in their daily dialogues. Essentially is, it is free advertising triggered by customer experiences — … word-of-mouth marketing can be encouraged through different publicity activities set up by companies, or by having opportunities to encourage consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketer communications." (Kenton 2020.)

Press releases and their purpose:

> "A press release is a written communication that reports specific but brief information about an event, circumstance, product launch, or other happening. It's typically tied to a business or organization and provided to media through a variety of means." (Wolfe 2021.)